

Munaqashat:

Gorgias Studies in the Modern Middle East 4

Reforming Ottoman Governance

Success, Failure and the Path to Decline


By

Fuat Andic

Suphan Andic

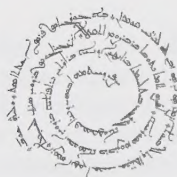


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Munagashat: Gorgias Studies in the Modern Middle East takes an interdisciplinary approach towards understanding the formation of the Arab world, Turkey, and Iran from the late Ottoman period to the present day. *Munagashat*, the Arabic word for “conversations,” assesses these social, political, and historical factors, as well as the region’s dynamic global interactions, through a critical lens. This series aims to appeal to specialists as well as general audiences seeking to diversify their understanding of the modern Middle East.

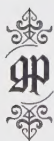
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We also wish to thank Travis Lee, who copyedited this volume, as well as Gorgias Press for publishing the book and giving us the pleasure of seeing this volume in print.



Figure 1: The Ottoman Empire during the time of Süleyman the Magnificent (1520–1566)

CHRONOLOGY (SELIM I–MEHMET VI)

Years of reign	Sultan	Important dates
1512–1520	Selim I	Conquest of Egypt, Selim assumes the title of Caliph (1517)
1520–1566	Süleyman	Vienna sieged (1529); War with Venice (1537–1540); Annexation of Hungary (1541)
1566–1574	Selim II	Ottoman navy loses the battle of Lepanto (1571)
1574–1595	Murad III	Janissary revolts (1589 and 1591–1592)
1595–1603	Mehmed III	War with Austria continues (1595–)
1603–1617	Ahmed I	War with Austria ends; Buda is recovered (1604)
1617–1622	Osman II	Janissaries murder Osman (1622)
1622–1623	Mustafa I	Janissary Revolt (1622)
1623–1640	Murad IV	Baghdad recovered (1638); War with Iran (1624–1639)
1640–1648	Ibrahim I	War with Venice (1645); Assassination of Ibrahim (1648)
1648–1687	Mehmed IV	Janissary dominance in Istanbul and anarchy (1649–1651); War with Venice continues (1663); War with Austria, and siege of Vienna (1683)
1687–1691	Süleyman II	Janissary revolt (1687); Austria's occupation of Belgrade (1688)
1691–1695	Ahmed II	War with Austria (1694)
1695–1703	Mustafa II	Treaty of Karlowitz (1699); Janissary revolt and deposition of Mustafa (1703)
1703–1730	Ahmed III	Refuge of Karl XII (1709); War with Venice (1714–1718); War with Austria (1716); Treaty of Passarowitz (1718);

		Tulip Era (1718–1730)
1730–1754	Mahmud I	War with Russia and Austria (1736–1759)
1754–1774	Mustafa III	War with Russia (1768); Russian Fleet in the Aegean (1770); Invasion of the Crimea (1771)
1774–1789	Abdülhamid I	Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca (1774); War with Russia (1787)
1789–1807	Selim III	Consultative Council (1789); Napoleon in Egypt (1798); Janissary revolt and assassination of Selim (1807)
1807–1808	Mustafa IV	Janissaries dominate administration
1808–1839	Mahmud II	Document of Agreement (1808); Eradication of Janissaries (1826); Treaty of Hünkâr İskelesi (1833); Battle of Nizip (1839)
1839–1861	Abdümeccid	Imperial Edict (1839); Crimean War (1853–1856); Imperial Edict (1856); Treaty of Paris (1856)
1861–1876	Abdülaziz	Suez canal opens (1875)
1876–1909	Abdülhamid II	First Constitution (1876); War with Russia (1877); Parliament closed <i>sine die</i> (1877); Young Turks revolution and second constitution (1908)
1909–1918	Mehmed V	War with Italy (1911); Balkan war (1912); World War I (1914–1918)
1918–1922	Mehmed VI	Defeat (1918); Mehmed VI leaves Istanbul (1922); end of Sultanate

NOTE ON TRANSCRIPTIONS

Spellings of Turkish words and names in the text are according to official modern Turkish. As a phonetic language, Turkish is easy to pronounce. The unusual pronunciation of the eight letters not found in English is noted below.

Â, â	Long a as in <i>bar</i>
C, c	'G' as in <i>general</i>
Ç, ç	'Tch' as in <i>match</i>
ğ	Soft 'gh' as in <i>though</i>
I, ı	'U' as in <i>radium</i>
Ş, ş	'Sh' as in <i>shall</i>
Ö, ö	'Ea' as in <i>heard</i>
Ü, ü	'U' as <i>municipality</i>

PREFACE

This book grew out of an early attempt at translating our previous study, *Reforms in the Ottoman Empire*, which we published in Turkish. The purpose of that book was to give Turkish readers a brief history of Ottoman administrative reform efforts in a single volume. However, simply translating our Turkish volume into English would not suffice for the non-Turkish reader, for what we assume to be common knowledge for Turkish readers is not necessarily so for non-Turkish readers. Expansive clarification was needed.

The history of such reforms has been told before in books and scholarly articles authored by both Turkish and foreign historians. However, with few exceptions, most suffer from a number of shortcomings. For instance, studies penned in the early years of the Turkish Republic are tainted with ideological biases and revisions of Ottoman history. Among such previous studies are critiques of Sultan Abdülhamid II that go to great lengths to demonize him. Early republican ideologues painted him as despotic, tyrannical and the ‘red’ (or blood-stained) Sultan while remaining silent regarding his dramatic efforts at reform. Still others claim the reign of Sultan Abdülmecid in the early nineteenth century was the first period of attempted modernization (or *tanzimat* in Turkish), all but ignoring the efforts of his predecessor, Sultan Mahmud II. Yet Mahmud was perhaps the most determined of all the reformers and took extraordinary measures for reform, revolutionary for his time, when internal and external circumstances complicated reforms. Without Sultan Mahmud II there would have been no Tanzimat Era.

In yet another example of ideologically driven bias and revisionism, many early Turkish historians wrote of the ‘Tulip Era’ during the first half of the eighteenth century as one of hedonism, debauchery and fornication. In fact, it was the only renaissance in the history of the Ottoman Empire. To this day, such revisionism is repeated even in the history textbooks used by Turkish high school

students. Additionally, they characterize prominent Turkish political actors of the early twentieth century, the inheritors of the Ottoman Empire, as heroes promoting liberty, equality, and progress. Nothing is further from the truth. These inaccurate assertions and defamatory labels should be brought in line with the historical record.

Historical events are like links in a chain: each link is influenced by the preceding ones and in turn influences those thereafter. Events and eras do not stand alone. However, in many writings on Ottoman era reforms, a general conceptual framework, within which such reforms can be studied, is absent. Yet, because history is not merely an accumulation of happenings, but a chain of components along a continuum, such a framework is crucial. We decided that neo-institutional economics provides such a framework for our purposes of studying Ottoman reforms, though it was not included in our Turkish edition of this volume. However, our aim in both versions is the same: to present readers with a concise history of Ottoman era administrative reforms. We do not claim to present new historical facts. Such facts have been exhaustively expounded upon in Turkish and foreign historical literature. We merely seek to set this examination within a condensed, appropriate format the non-specialist may comprehend and enjoy.

F.A & S.A
Washington, DC, August 2013

INTRODUCTION

This book examines the history of administrative reform efforts throughout the seven hundred years of the Ottoman Empire, beginning with the reign of Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent and continuing to the demise of the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of the Turkish Republic. Early in the Empire's history, public administration slowly but surely began to deteriorate. Radical technological and intellectual changes taking place in Europe, especially during the Enlightenment of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which transformed governance there, did not alter the outlooks of the Empire's rulers. Ignoring change elsewhere, the Ottoman Empire began to lose the territories it had gained in Europe and the global balance of power turned against it. Many historians, Turkish as well as foreign, have investigated the decline of the Ottoman Empire and its causes. Indeed, many volumes and numerous scholarly articles have been published on the subject. All these works are valuable but none, as far as we know, attempts to study the causes of the Empire's decline within a general conceptual framework. Nor have previous writers analyzed the often antagonistic relationships amongst the various governmental institutions and organizations that plagued the Ottoman Empire. Too often, the events leading to the Empire's decline and its ultimate demise at the end of the First World War are examined as a series of distinct events without establishing links between them. Such investigations provide unsatisfactory explanations to the topic at hand.

Of course, history does not consist of individual and separate links, but is a chain of events; a chain in which each link is affected by and connected to the previous one and in turn affects each subsequent one. To investigate only what happened at a given point in history is not sufficient; one also needs to know why events have happened. What are the links between events: the causes and effects? This is of paramount importance and necessitates a global

view grounded not only in theory but also in a developed frame of reference within which events are analyzed. Investigating the history of reforms in the Ottoman Empire is no different.

The book's first chapter explains the general conceptual framework the book adopts: neo-institutional economics.¹ It provides an approach well suited to investigating the centuries-long back and forth of reform and counter-reform efforts in the Ottoman Empire. In three previous books, we investigated the radical Ottoman reform movement known as the Tulip Era (1718–1730), as well as attempts at reform during the nineteenth century, but these examined isolated approaches to reform.² In time, we concluded a more expansive approach was needed. It is, however, important to point out that a number of Ottoman writers attempted such thorough diagnoses of the Empire's ills within the context of governance and articulated them in counsels they wrote, which were submitted either directly to the Sultans or contained within history books they penned. These counsels provide great historical value. Practically all of them diagnosed the problems facing the Empire, but frequently and simplistically recommended a return to the "good old days" of Süleyman the Magnificent.³ Of course, such a remedy was not practical.

¹ The adjective "neo" in neo-institutional economics does not imply that it is new. The approach has been used for more than a quarter of a century. Its proponents used the adjective "neo" in order to separate their approach from that of Veblenian institutional economics. See Thrainn Eggertsson, *Economic Behavior and Institutions*. Cambridge University Press, 1990; Douglass C. North, *Structure and Change in Economic History*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1981; *idem*, *Institutions, Economic Change and Economic Performance*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990; *idem*, "Economic Performance through Time," *American Economic Review*, June 1994, 359–368.

² Fuat Andic & Suphan Andic, *The Last of the Ottoman Grandees: The Life and Political Testament of Ali Pasha*. Istanbul: ISIS Press, 1996; *idem*, *Window to the West – The Tulip Era (Batıya Açılan Pencere – Lâle Devri)*, Istanbul: EREN, 2006; *idem*, *The Crimean War, Ali Pasha and the Paris Treaty (Kırım Savaşı – Ali Paşa ve Paris Antlaşması)*. Istanbul: EREN 2002.

³ The last counsel, the political testament of Âli Pasha, is an exception.

The book reviews all of these counsels and, wherever appropriate, examines the similarity of their approach with that of neo-institutional economics. With that in mind, the book first explains the basic tenets of neo-institutional economics, as it is the analytical lens used throughout the book. The subsequent chapters then summarize each of the aforementioned counsels. This is done, for the most part, in chronological order and we argue that the first serious attempt at institutional reform in the Ottoman Empire occurred during the reign of Sultan Ahmed III (1703–1730) during the Tulip Era. This period in fact brought with it a significant change in the mentality of the Empire's administrators, but it unfortunately did not last long. This brief era of reform began in 1718 and ended abruptly in 1730 with a bloody revolt by the Janissaries, the Ottoman sultan's elite corps of household infantry.

The next serious attempt at reform was spearheaded by Sultan Selim III (1789–1807), who focused primarily, but not exclusively, on the rejuvenation of the army and the Janissaries. However, another military revolt ended Selim III's reign and his attempted reforms, then known as the New Order (*Nizam-ı Cedid*), came to an end. In that period one thing becomes very clear: the military-religious (*ulema*) complex (especially the Janissaries) was strengthened and resolved to even more fervently oppose reform. This was due to nascent reform measures undermining the common interests of these influential Ottoman power centers. Indeed, this anti-reform alliance not only created major obstacles for reform, but thwarted general economic and social change. Despite the previous success and power of this alliance, Sultan Mahmud II, who succeeded Selim III and was one of the ablest, most determined and courageous sultans in the history of the Ottoman Empire, succeeded to a great extent in breaking the Janissary-*ulema* complex. He obliterated the Janissary order, which in the previous two hundred years had challenged the power of the Sultans and, in more cases than not, succeeded in overthrowing several of them.

We then move on to the mid-nineteenth century, which saw the Imperial Edict of Sultan Abdülmecid, the son and successor of Mahmud II, who ascended to the throne in 1839. The underlying concept of Abdülmecid's edict was no longer simply reform of the military or a return to the time of Süleyman the Magnificent, but instead to adapt Ottoman institutions and organizations to the contemporary, European model. Without doubt, reforms took place,

but they did not redress all the ills plaguing Ottoman governance. As the nineteenth century continued to unfold, the reform paradigm changed. The Imperial Edicts of 1839 and 1856 were steps towards a paradigm of constitutional governance. This originated in part with intellectuals, but also within the higher echelons of the military, who favored a parliament-checked constitutional monarchy. To this end, the military dethroned Abdülaziz, who succeeded Abdülmecid, and in 1876 Abdülhamid II took the throne with promises of a new constitution and the establishment of a parliamentary system. However, the 1877 Russo-Ottoman war began and interrupted reform, leading the Sultan to suspend the constitution and parliament. In 1909 yet another coup dethroned Abdülhamid II after a 33-year reign. The parliament reconvened and the constitution was reinstated. However, the coup, engineered by the military, was mounted by leaders who were young, inexperienced, over-ambitious and devoid of political wisdom.

Finally, we cover the triumvirate of Enver, Cemal and Talât Pashas that took power, producing no substantial reforms, though Enver Pasha, intent on reforming the military, virtually surrendered it to Imperial Germany's High Command. At the time, problems the world over denied an opportunity for the Ottoman Empire's leaders to pursue reform. In 1911 Italy seized what is today Libya from the Empire and Tsarist Russia, the Ottoman's perennial enemy, aided the Balkan provinces of Greece and Bulgaria, which had always coveted Istanbul, in a war declared in 1912, and succeeded in removing from the Ottoman domain the bulk of the Balkans (the Empire's European holdings). Even if serious reforms were contemplated, under such circumstances they had to be subordinated to the greater concerns of the Empire's very survival. Due to such concerns, the Ottoman Empire entered into alliance with Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire and, with them, fell into abyss of World War I. The Empire that had been living on borrowed money since the mid-nineteenth century was now living on borrowed time. At the end of the war it collapsed and its Arab

provinces were partitioned between France and Britain, carrying forth even to the present unhealthy consequences.⁴

This book covers a great sweep of world history through the lens of the Ottoman Empire and its varied attempts — some more serious and successful than others — to reform its governing institutions and organizations. Despite an ignoble end to the Empire in the global conflagration that was World War I, over a period of 700 years there were numerous efforts at reform undertaken, though, as we will show, they were just as often undermined by the inter- and intra-institutional rivalries and vested interests the Sultans sought to alter.

⁴ For the aftermath of the partition of the Ottoman Empire, see David Fromkin, *The Peace to End All Peace*. New York: Avon Books, 1989, and Margaret MacMillan, *Paris 1919: Six Months that Changed the World*. 2003.

GOVERNANCE AND REFORM PARADIGM

Neo-institutional economics is an economic perspective through which organizational forms and institutional arrangements, and their effects on economic outcomes under varying political and social conditions, are investigated.¹ Central to analysis conducted through this economic perspective is the rational choice model, which emphasizes the maximization of benefits and the minimization of costs by individual agents, who maximize their objective functions subject to constraints, these being organizations and institutions.

Institutions here refer to paradigms of governance, such as laws, rules, regulations, norms and conventions. Included amongst these are property rights. Organizations are primarily agents that carry out the designated mandates of the principal(s) within the institutional arrangements that constrain their actions. They are formal structures of authority designed by their creators that maximize wealth, income or other objectives defined by the opportunities afforded by the institutional structure of the society, including political, economic, social or educational entities.

Organizations and institutions change with political arrangements, the structures of property rights, with technologies employed and with resources, commodities and services that are produced and exchanged in various transactions. Production involves not only the physical transformation of inputs into outputs, but also the transfer of property rights between the owners of resources and to appropriate the returns. In the transfer of these

¹ For a detailed exposé of neo-institutional economics see Egger-
tsson, *Economic Behavior and Institutions*. Cambridge Univ. Press, 1990
and North, *Structure and Change in Economic History* New York: W. W. Nor-
ton, 1981.

rights, agents strive to maximize their own interests subject to institutional constraints.

Transfers of property rights carry transaction costs. In general terms these can be defined as those costs that arise when, through some formal or informal contracts, individuals exchange ownership rights to economic assets and enforce and monitor their exclusive rights on these assets. Such costs can be difficult to measure because they include the time to acquire the necessary information, bribery, as well as losses due to imperfect monitoring and enforcement. Also, there may be persistent incentives to cheat, free ride, steal, renege and so forth. The cost is especially high in case of widespread corruption and bribes at various levels of agents. These in the final analysis lead to the reduction of the production levels in the economy.

TRANSACTION COSTS AND PROPERTY RIGHTS

The level of transaction costs makes the assignment of ownership rights imperative because economic organizations and systems influence the structure of the political and economic institutions that are the key to determining a state's course of development. The search for information and its cost is the key to the costs of transacting. The making of formal or informal contracts, the protection of rights against third party encroachment, the monitoring of contractual partners and the enforcement of agreements are not without cost. The cost of transacting makes the assignment of ownership rights paramount, introduces the question of organization and makes the structure of political institutions a key to understanding economic growth.

Property rights provide an individual the right to use an asset, transform or even destroy it, earn an income from it or permanently transfer its ownership. To have exclusive rights to property demands enforcement, meaning others are excluded from an owned piece of property's use. Such exclusion is also not without cost. High transaction costs can limit the enforcement of exclusive property rights even by powerful states. Without appropriate social norms, individuals may establish structures of property rights that rival those of the state, especially if the state finds it relatively costly to enforce its rules. The non-state structures that form usually do so in the shadow of high transaction costs, often with the help of corrupt agents of the state and outside official or legitimate power

structures. They invite civil unrest as they come out into the open because states will often seek to undo them and replace them with state controlled structures. If the state capitulates, with or without a fight, the agents of the non-state system become the new political leaders.

THE PRINCIPAL-AGENT PARADIGM

When a principal delegates rights to an agent within a formal or informal contract to represent his interests in return for some kind of payment, a principal-agent relationship is established. When the interests of principals and agents do not coincide, agents are likely to make decisions against the principal's interests unless they are effectively constrained and a forceful system of monitoring is put in place. This is fraught with difficulties, since information on the tasks to be performed is not distributed symmetrically between the principal and the agent. The latter usually has more information than the principal on the duties assigned to him, because it costs him relatively less to acquire it. He also knows his own actions, abilities and preferences. Hence it should not come as a surprise that agents engage in opportunistic behavior when enforcing a contract.

Applying this paradigm to the state gives it a central role in this frame of reference, since it is the nature of the state (its governing structures) that is critical in determining the rules that govern and enforce property rights. The extent to which the enforcement can succeed depends upon the power of the principal to carry it out. When transaction costs are high, individuals and groups who are the agents and control the state will design structures of property rights that maximize their own wealth and aim to maintain power. This can be inconsistent with the development strategy and determines the development, stagnation or the decline of the society and economy. One method to maximize the objectives of those who control this state might be to decentralize economic power, i.e., give greater power to the agents. However, given the country's political history, evolution of cultural and religious precepts and a host of other variables, this may lead to loss of control.

In other words, the transaction costs, the relationship between the ruler and his agents (prime ministers, cabinet members, high level functionaries, etc.) and the agents' political behavior may af-

fect the property rights in a way that inhibits capital accumulation, human as well as physical.

PREDATORY FINANCE

Predatory or confiscatory methods of financing government expenditures are also linked to changes in the nature of property rights. If financing alternatives are limited, they can have disastrous long-term consequences that can lead to the stagnation and decline of a political entity. Hence, a state with an existing system of property rights that depends on the society's political structure can determine the conditions that will lead to economic growth and prosperity, as well as decline. Property rights define the economic organization of the society and will determine the extent to which the country is endowed with exploitable economic resources. However, the type of economic organization selected need to be that which will maximize development. For this to occur, a favorable set of property rights is required. In other words, present and future ownership rights need to be clearly defined, such that the cost of measuring and transferring assets needs to be as low as possible and the state must refrain from directly assigning ownership rights.

Of course, the state must have revenues to finance the services it renders to the public, the wars it wages, the law and order and justice it maintains and so forth. A state that engages in predatory finance to collect the required revenues for these services faces three constraints. The first is political: there will always be the possibility of political rivals attempting to replace the state. If this is the case, it will follow a policy of relieving the tax burden on those who could replace it (for example, the military) and heavily taxing those for whom the costs of organization are too high to succeed in effectively replacing the ruler (for example, the rural population). The second constraint is that agents of the state who collect taxes will always have the propensity to behave opportunistically in order to maximize a part of tax revenue they will keep for themselves. The third constraint is asymmetry in the access to information inherent in the principal-agent relationship. The ruler needs to have accurate information on taxes collected, but this may not be reported to him correctly (and because of the second constraint and the incentive for the agent to behave in his own interests, probably will not be). All these constraints favor the implementation of methods of taxation and property rights that lower the potential

development of a society and can lead to stagnation and economic collapse.

A prosperous state must have the political will to adjust the structure of property rights in accordance with changes in the economic environment. But such adjustments are often blocked by agents of the state who feel threatened by the changes and fear the loss of privileges will weaken their bargaining position. Moreover, the conduct of a state's finances affects the definition and stability of exclusive rights. Predatory public finance is tantamount to uncertain rights. The uncertainty of property rights causes behavioral changes by making adjustments to minimize the risk of expropriation. With the uncertain or weak protection of property rights, capital is often used in trade rather than in long-term investments to avoid expropriation. Historical evidence shows that predatory public finance shrinks the state's tax base, reduces tax revenues, results in chronic deficits and ultimately leads to economic decline.

COUNSELS UNHEEDED

A number of Ottoman writers attempted a thorough diagnoses of the Empire's ills within the context of governance and articulated them in counsels, which were submitted either directly to the Sultans or incorporated within the history books they penned. These counsels provide great historical value. In what follows a chronological summary of these counsels, mostly unheeded, is presented and the chapter then consolidates their views. Although they are incomplete, there is a remarkable similarity between the views of these Ottoman writers and the framework of neo-institutional economics.

Eight of these counsels are known, written in different times mostly but not exclusively by statesmen. Two of them, in fact, are incorporated in the treatises of two historians of the seventeenth century. Only two counsels were commissioned by the Sultans of the time. Each of the authors of the Ottoman counsels emphasized a deadly rupture in the relationship between principal and agent, with sultans relinquishing their role and responsibilities as principal, and the agents (that is, the Grand Vizier and his subordinates) overtly and covertly assuming the role of the principal. There were exceptions, of course. The Sultans Murad IV (1623–1640) and Abdülhamid II (1876–1909) both during their reigns asserted the absolute rule as principal.

THE LETTER OF ASAPH (*ASAFNAME*)

The Letter of Asaph was penned by Lûtfî Pasha (?–1562?). In it he expresses the demand for urgent reform. The *Letter* is based on his own many years of experience as the Grand Vizier of Süleyman the Magnificent (a post from which he was dismissed in 1541). He analyzes the problems the Empire was facing and provides a set of ethical standards to serve as guidance for his successors in such a high and influential office.

According to Lûtfi Pasha, the grand viziers must, first and foremost, be disinterested in any private personal aim and must see to it that the property rights of subjects were respected and protected, for he saw the summary annexation of the people's property to that of the sovereign as a sign of decay within the state. Lûtfi Pasha counseled that the grand viziers should be honest in their dealings with the Sultan and, above all, must avoid gifts of any kind. He noted, quite presciently, that corruption of state officials was like a disease without remedy, which could spread throughout an administration. To avoid this ailment and inoculate organizations of government, he went on to recommend that appointments and promotions be made solely on the basis of merit and competence, without favoritism or interest, without regard to politics or personal relationships, and without submitting to influence or pressure. A well-managed and uncorrupted treasury being necessary for the health and good running sultanate, Lûtfi Pasha noted in the *Letter* that the Empire's financial system was the crucial pillar maintaining the state. To this end, the Grand Vizier should work tirelessly to ensure a surplus in the treasury's coffers. One manner of insurance he recommended was for the state to employ salaried agents (*emins*) as tax collectors rather than outsourcing collection to third-party tax farmers, who frequently kept much of the collections to themselves. Furthermore, the levels of taxation and the amount collected should be determined by the Chief Treasurer for the purposes of accountability and clarity, and not by lower level underlings or the more politically motivated and connected officials within the bureaucracy. Additionally, he advised care in the imposition of emergency levies on the peasantry, recommending they not be too severe or frequent. He noted it was in the Empire's interest that peasants remain on the land, so depopulation of the countryside — which could be encouraged with an undue and heavy tax burden levied against the peasants' meager production from the land — should be avoided at all cost.

With so sober and perspective a counsel, at the very peak of the Empire, the *Letter* correctly highlighted the indicators characteristic of Ottoman decline: incompetence; redundant bureaucracy; cyclical deficits, fiscal rapacity on the part of officials, strangled

economic growth and the decay of integrity and loyalty within Ottoman officialdom.¹

COUNSEL FOR SULTANS (*NASIHAT-ÜS-SELÂTİN*)

The *Counsel* was penned by Mustafa bin Ahmet Âli (1541–1599). It is based on his personal experience and includes his extensive thoughts on what a good state ought to be, as opposed to what he identified as the failures inherent in the very structure of the Ottoman State. Âli was highly critical of harmful Ottoman administrative practices of the time, such as the increasing isolation of the Sultans from the management of public affairs, the growing political influence of women and eunuchs in the *Harem* (women's apartments in the palace), and the increasing reliance on corruption and bribery (over merit and skill) in the appointment of high functionaries. Such practices bred dysfunction within the government, causing rapacious and incompetent administration, unchecked greed and erosion of respect for and observance of religious law and customary social norms, and ultimately, the oppression of the subjects by usurers and bureaucrats. The injustice he saw destroying the Empire, made Âli yearn for the age of Süleyman the Magnificent.

The *Counsel* was completed in 1581 when Âli was the fief registrar in Aleppo. It consists of a preface, four chapters, a conclusion, a supplement, and an appendix. In the preface, Âli discusses the responsibility the ruler has for his appointed officials and their behavior. According to Âli, the chief duty of the Sultan ought to be careful examination, supervision and oversight of the agents to whom he delegates authority. For their part, the agents must protect the Sultan's (in other words the principal's) prestige. Without such potent checks the Sultan's detachment and resulting rapacious behavior on the part of his representatives would lead to the oppression and the exploitation of the people.

The first chapter of Âli's *Counsel* deals with the principles of government. Following these, Âli recommends the Sultan be coun-

¹ For the full text, see İsmail Hâmi Danişmend, *Ottoman Statesmen (Osmanlı Devlet Erkânı)*. Istanbul: Türkiye Yayınevi, 1971.

seled by a wise companion knowledgeable in every possible field, that he appoint qualified, intelligent personnel to high offices and honest secretaries to the Imperial Council (*Divan-ı Hümayun*), and reward those who distinguish themselves by their untiring efforts. He recommends the meritocracy, in which officeholders are not dismissed for frivolous reasons and where men who prove their worth and skill are promoted. He goes on to counsel fiscal prudence, warns against corruption, and recommends the Sultan protect the public treasury from waste and not squander the public monies to help ensure the treasury remains in surplus. To help embezzlement and theft, provincial governors should not interfere with either the royal or the public treasury or the collection of revenues which always should exceed expenditures.

The second chapter relates to the dramatic decline observed in the Empire's traditional customs and the quality of its administration. He notes a permissive and accommodating attitude on the part of the viziers that permitted the intrusion of unqualified persons into various administrative careers and how this had led to a complete breakdown in the Empire's bureaucratic functions. Qualified people were dismissed as power begun to be gained through bribery. Incompetent judges paid their way to high offices and the military fief (*timar*) and large fief (or *zeamet*, which yielded greater tax revenue than the *timar*) systems were abused by the provincial governors to amass personal wealth at the expense of the Empire and its organizations. The result was the demoralization of an army that had seen many recent victories and the loss of peace and safety for those tax-paying Christian and non-Christian citizens called *reaya*. Furthermore, he recommends against the office of tax collector being given out to notable patrons through tax farming (*iltizam*), for these tax farmers (*mültezims*) took on an enormous debt and therefore oppressed the taxpayers who worked their land in an effort to collect ever more money. This in turn provided a perverse incentive for them to record tax revenues incorrectly, robbing the public treasury for their own personal advancement and enrichment. Süleyman the Magnificent never allowed such practices. Âli recognizes, however, that the situation has deteriorated to such an extent that prohibition of these misdeeds is impossible, as is their reform.

The third chapter dwells upon the specific behavior and actions of the officials that harm the Empire. It describes the malefi-

cence of the Sultan's agents, such as the governors general (*beylerbeys*) and the directors of finance that indicated the breakdown of the principal-agent relationship. It contains myriad examples of extensive oppression and embezzlement in every respect. Âli describes corrupt tax registrars (*defterdars*) embezzling funds equivalent to the entire annual tax yield and the theft of slaves and camels by public officials. He notes the public treasury being used as private possession; the secretaries charging fees in excess of those prescribed and pocketing the difference and soldiers at fortresses going underpaid while rural masters (*ağas*), and tax farmers collected the full pay from the public treasury. Bribes were required in any and all transactions, the price to do business with the state. Peasants were ill-treated by superintendents; caretakers (*mütevellîs*) of charitable establishments stole from the trusts they were to protect; the collection of army provision (*nüzzul*) and emergency levy (*avarız*) were abused through corruption for self-enrichment. In short, in his *Counsel* Âli detailed thorough and extensive corruption as a way of life within Ottoman officialdom.

Âli's work is remarkable for its wealth of content based on events he personally experienced and observed, combined with general lessons astutely drawn from Ottoman history. On the basis of such observations and lessons learned he recommended in the rest of his *Counsel* that the entire administrative system be abolished and the annual salaries of tax collectors, whether official or contracted, be determined to more reliably take account of their payments of the emergency levy to the registrar and his rural masters, the managers of the revenue-yielding land (*mukataa*). He advised that the *mukataa* be given either by way of trustees or supervisors who were wealthy and trustworthy fief holders. Should there be embezzlement, Âli recommended the embezzled sum be collected from the *timar* in order to do away with exploitation or opportunistic oppression of the taxpaying farmers.²

² For the complete text, see Andreas Tietze, translator and editor, *Mustafa Âli's Counsel for Sultans of 1581*. Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften. 2 vols., 1979, 1982. Also "Das Nasihatname," *Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, Vol. 18, 1864, pp. 644–740.

THE BOOK OF GOOD THINGS (*KİTAB-I MÜSTETAB*)

There is no historical record of the authorship of the *Book*, nor is it known exactly when it was written. However, because of the language used to compose it one can surmise it was finished either late sixteenth or early seventeenth century. Its authorship and exact date of composition aside, *The Book of Good Things* analyzes the social, administrative, military, and economic decline of the Ottoman Empire during the latter half of the sixteenth century. It has often served as a source for subsequent analyses of the problems afflicting the Empire. According to this work, the three pillars of the Empire were *reaya*, treasury, and the military. According to the author all three have decayed and degenerated significantly. This threatened the very Empire itself, for the Sultan could not rule without troops; there could be no troops without money; there could be no money without a prosperous *reaya*. However, the cycle of decay can be halted, for the *reaya* pay the required taxes if the government is good and just.

The Book of Good Things maintains the main reason for the deterioration of the Ottoman state was the Sultan's weakening authority. This weakening was in turn caused by a decrease in the influence of the formerly powerful Grand Vizier. Previously it was the Grand Vizier who had absolute power to execute the Sultan's authority. However, this direct and special relationship was broken and diluted due to the interference of those in pursuit of their own self-interest and enrichment (such as provincial governors); a diffusion of power and influence generated by perverse incentives in the system. This led to significant disruptions in provincial administration.

The Moslem subjects were allowed to enter the janissary order. Many peasants began to abandon their land for the prospect of wealth within the system, where some became palace guards (*bostancı*) and servants (*kapıkulus*). This resulted in declining agricultural production and tax revenues, while a greater number of servants and guards raised palace expenditures. Such overstaffing of the military further raised expenditures. The need to raise revenue to meet rising expenditures, the increase in the tax burden on farmers and the widespread use of tax farming led to further abuses and rampant administrative corruption. The solution, according to the anonymous author of *The Book of Good Things*, could only be found in a return to an absolute, centralist state with a competent, honest

and religious Grand Vizier as the Sultan's right hand and sole advisor, and a return to the traditional administrative palace staff and professional military organization, slimmed down, and based on merit.³

THE RULE OF ACTION FOR THE RECTIFICATION OF DEFECTS (*DÜSTÛRÜ'L-AMEL LI ISLÂH'IL-HALEL*)

The Rule of Action was written in 1656 at the request of Sultan Mehmed IV (1648-1687) by Mustafa ibn-i Abd Allah (1608-1657). Also known as Kâtip Çelebi (one of the most distinguished Ottoman scholars), he wrote the *Rule* to explain the persistent deficits in imperial finances arising from declining revenues and rising expenditures, as well as the reasons behind an out-of-control military and destructive effect of its behavior on the peasantry. The *Rule* was born out of the discussions held over several meetings between the author and officials responsible for managing the Empire's fiscal affairs. It provides detailed statistics on the size of the military and on the state of revenues and expenditures in the Ottoman Empire at the time.

Kâtip Çelebi wrote that empires have a three-stage life cycle of growth, stagnation, and decline. The first phase is one in which the peasantry is left unmolested by the state, agricultural production prospers and, as a result, tax revenues rise. The second phase is characterized by over-taxation and extortion of the peasantry by officeholders through the imposition of extra levies, causing peasants to abandon their land and flee the countryside, decreasing agricultural production, and ensuring declining revenues. Officials' pursuit of self-interest and enrichment through their official responsibilities and positions thus degraded the ability of the state to provide services and eroded it from within. As a result, both the state and its subjects suffered. In Çelebi's opinion, the Empire was in this second phase, but was well on its way to the third. It was imperative to implement remedies to halt the decline.

³ For the complete text, see Yaşar Yücel, ed., *Kitabı Müstetab*, Ankara 1983, second edition.

His reasoning proceeds thus: A state is supported by men protected by the sword whose financial needs are met through resources derived from the toil of the peasantry, who in turn can only prosper under just and competent rule. In the past sultans protected the peasantry and treated them justly. They were concerned about the welfare of the villages and provincial towns and sought to keep them prosperous. However, frequent rebellions drove much of the peasantry from their lands and into the cities. Agricultural production declined. Those who remained on their land were subjected to excessive taxation to account for the decreased revenue caused by the decreased production, which drove more peasants from the countryside. Additionally, corruption at high level in the government meant posts began to be auctioned off to the highest bidders who, in turn, recouped the cost paid for their position by extorting the peasantry through even greater taxation and through bribery. Bribery compounded the operation caused by excessive taxation. Leading to an empty countryside and decreasing production to tax, this oppression left the treasury coffers empty, while expenditures rose with widespread luxury and ostentation, accompanied by an increase in the military payroll. The budgetary deficit escalated in a very short time; new taxes were introduced, but could not keep up with the pace of rising expenditures.

Left unaddressed, this situation could only lead to disaster. Çelebi noted that if the tyranny of excessive taxation and the damage done by the sale of offices were not undone, and if a just system was not put in place to recover what was lost in revenue and trust, then the Empire would be ruined and would fall. Therefore, his recommendations included halving tax rates, ending the practice of auctioning off official posts, and the adoption of measures to decrease the military payroll. The peasantry was so weak and production so low at this time that no further taxes could be collected. Nevertheless, collection of revenue equivalent to one year's expenditure was required to pay off debt and accumulate a reserve. To this end, Çelebi counseled a reduction in the peasantry's heavy tax burden in order to restore the strength of the agricultural sector in the short term. He also recommended ending the practice of selling offices, appointing efficient and trustworthy individuals to government offices for periods of long duration, and reprimanding or dismissing those who extorted the people, all in hopes of further strengthening the peasantry and reviving the state. Finally, he rec-

commended cutting expenditures, primarily through the reduction of the size of the military personnel accompanied by the employment of competent, experienced and honest officials.

Çelebi recognized the difficulty in closing the gap between revenues and expenditures and maintaining a budgetary balance by raising the former and reducing the latter, thereby ending a persistent deficit. The only solution to save the state would be the use of force by a strong reformer. He saw that from the military organization's point of view it was impossible, even futile, to try to return to the situation that was in effect during the reign of Sultan Süleyman. Yet, only a man of the sword could undertake such an action, since the *ayans* (notables) and the high officials were too interested in their own self-interest and enrichment to do what was necessary to change the course.⁴

THE TREATISE OF KOÇI BEY (*RİSALE-I KOÇI BEY*)

The *Treatise* was composed in 1630 by Koçi Bey (also known as Göreceli Koca Mustafa Bey (his dates of birth and death are unknown) and submitted to Sultan Murad IV at the latter's request. It is a significant treatise and a detailed, frank exposition on the decline of the Ottoman Empire as a world power, as well as the causes of decline. Koçi Bey revealed the dysfunction that had crept into the Ottoman bureaucracy from Sultan Murad III (1574–1595) to Sultan Murad IV (1623–1640) and traced the Empire's weaknesses and ultimate stagnation back to the reign of Süleyman the Magnificent. In his *Treatise*, Koçi Bey maintains that the state during the reign of Süleyman was so powerful and authority so centralized that factors causing its ultimate decline did not surface until the much later reign of Sultan Murad III. Out of character for advisors at the time, and somewhat courageously, Koçi Bey used his *Treatise* to honestly and harshly critique the manner in which the Empire was being ruled and had been weakened.

His *Treatise* primarily covered the breakdown of governing organizations and institutions, from the palace court to the bureau-

⁴ For the complete text, see Ali Can, ed., *Bozuklukların Düzeltilmesinde Tutulan Yollar*. Ankara: Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı Yayınları, No. 497, 1983.

cracy and the military, and critically examined how incompetent rulers and administrators succeeded intelligent and able ones. Bureaucratic processes and methods of recruiting, training and promotion deteriorated and the military decayed into a self-interested enterprise that cowed the Sultans and his subjects more than it frightened the Empire's external enemies.

Koçi Bey attributed the decay of the Empire to four principal but related factors: the Sultans' abdication of their oversight of governmental and military affairs, the erosion of the authority of the Grand Viziers and the accompanying diffusion of their power and influence to lesser positions, the growing rivalries and conflict amongst various bureaucratic power centers within the Ottoman administration and, finally, the growing corruption the above three factors encouraged, which undermined the *timar* system and led to the breakdown of military order, agricultural production and provincial governance.

He warned that the *fiefs* were being administered poorly by incompetent, unqualified supervisors and tax revenue was being lost as property was converted into *vakıfs* (religious trusts) or used as the private property of officials who were supposed to be stewards of the Empire's revenues. Simultaneously, a sharp increase in the tax rate and frequency of collection levied on the peasantry to compensate for revenue losses, caused, as they had in the past, the peasantry to abandon their land, leading to still further losses for the Empire.

Koçi Bey recommended the restoration of the Empire's traditional organizations, claiming such a move would solve the problems it was experiencing. The requirement he described as necessary to achieve such restorative reform was a strong and decisive sultan who could take firm control of all the affairs of state and stop the rot that was weakening the system. This recommendation was vindicated somewhat by the actions of Sultan Murad IV, the last warlike sultan, who by ruthless energy, brute force and leadership restored for a time the Empire's military power. Following Koçi Bey's advice, he made the Empire's organizations work as they had, dismissed those who abused their positions for personal benefit or refused to conform to his new order and he attempted to appoint able, honest and qualified officials. He reorganized the fief system by dismissing all fief-holders who were unable or unwilling to perform military service. He severely penalized bribery

and corruption by executing offenders and reformed the *ulema*, made appointments based on merit and restored the tax farm system managed by salaried tax collectors. However, all these reforms were reversed after Sultan Murad IV's death in 1640.⁵

HISTORY OF NAIMA (*NAIMA TARIHI*)

Mustafa Naima (1655–1716) was a court-appointed historiographer (*yakaniivis*) and in that capacity he thoroughly examined the past and contemporary trajectory of Ottoman affairs. A philosopher of history in the mold of the Moroccan scholar Ibn Khaldun, as Naima analyzed the course of the Empire's decline he drew liberally from the previous counsel authors Kâtip Çelebi and Mustafa Âli. According to Naima's *History*, the lives of all states consist of five principal stages: heroism, consolidation, confident security, contentment, and disintegration. He claimed most states perish in the second stage, but he decided that the Ottoman Empire had reached the fourth stage: contentment and, therefore, laxness and lethargy. In this stage, according to Naima, corruption is widespread and illegal activities, bribes, cheating and the pursuit of self-interest characterize both men of the sword (military) and of the pen (bureaucrats). This is also the point at which state expenditures begin to exceed receipts and the excessive cost of a growing and decadent military must be met with higher taxes.

The fifth phase is characterized by even more waste and excessive corruption, by laws that overturn previous, more pragmatic legislation, by the neglect of the peoples' interests and of proper training and maintenance of the military and by mounting deficits that lead to greater but inadequate taxation. The first recommendation Naima made — to arrest both the fourth and the fifth stages — was to end wars and direct all the state's attention to reform and addressing the Empire's internal affairs.

⁵ For the complete text, see W. F. A. Behrnhauer, "Koçabeg's Abhandlung über den Verfall des osmanischen Staatsgebäudes seit Sultan Suleiman dem Großen" (nach Wiener und St. Petersburger Handschriften), *Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, Vol. 15, 1861, pp. 272–332. Also Zuhurî Danışman, *Koçi Bey Risalesi (The Treatise of Koçi Bey)*. Istanbul: Millî Eğitim Basımevi, 1972.

He maintained that the Empire could not do without the military or the bureaucracy, but such machinery of the state could not function without sufficient revenue. The source of such revenue was, first and foremost, the *reaya*, who could not provide it without just and clear institutions of state or in the absence of safety and security. To arrest the decline of the state Naima recommended administration that was just and fair for all and provided special privilege to none, with a particular focus on the delivery of security and justice for the peasantry. He also urged a stringent oversight of the Empire's finances and an end to excessive pomp and spending in an effort to end persistent deficits and build a surplus.

Naima's *History* drew from the lessons of Ottoman history to show how a ruler could best overhaul the machinery of the state and provide it adequate control and supervision. In his opinion, centralized power in a strong sultan (or, failing that, Grand Vizier), as exemplified by Sultan Murad IV (1623–1640), would do the most good in righting the ship of state and keeping it on a steady course. To address fiscal problems, he recommended an end to emergency levies and taxes, a reduction of tax rates on the *reaya*, the appointment of qualified and honest tax registrars, who would collect on behalf of the state and not themselves, and an end to excessive expenditures. However, Naima added a caveat to his recommended end to extravagant government spending: the Sultan's lavish expenditures ought not to be cut as the public should never doubt the strength and wealth of the state.⁶

COUNSEL FOR VIZIERS AND GOVERNORS (*NASIHAH ÜL-VÜZERA VE'L-ÜMERA*)

Sarı Mehmet Pasha (?–1717) was one of a small group of Ottoman statesmen deeply concerned about the Empire's decline at the end of the sixteenth century. He held the post of chief financial officer seven times and, as a result, wrote with authority about the treasury, but also detailed the general conditions of an administration in rapid decline. His *Counsel*, consisting of a prologue and nine chap-

⁶ There are several Turkish editions of *History of Naima*. See Zuhurî Danışman, ed., *Naima Tarihi*. Istanbul: Zuhurî Danışman Yayınevi, 1967, 6 vols.

ters, deals with all aspects of society, from the behavior and habits of the Grand Vizier and the Secretary of the Treasury to the oppressive circumstances of the *reaya*, the conditions of the military, the *timar* and *zeamet*, and the destructive nature of corruption, harmfulness of bribes, avarice, greed and covetousness, pride and envy, arrogance and hypocrisy. He agreed with the authors of previous counsels that the Sultan's preeminent duty is to protect the well-being of his subjects and make them affluent, but disagreed with his predecessors that such an obligation requires a powerful sultan with centralized authority. Instead, Sari Mehmet recommended that the Sultan appoint a competent vizier and delegate to him vast authority to manage the state's affairs. His *Counsel* quotes Lûtfi Pasha's *Asafname*, reiterating a vizier's essential characteristics as intelligence, honesty and experience, as well as the zeal to find remedies to address the Empire's weakness and lethargy. He also urged great care in the selection of provincial governors, frontier commanders and lower-level officials to ensure they be worthy men.

Regarding the treasury, his recommendations followed a pattern similar to those proffered by previous advocates for reform: the appointment of competent officials based on merit, the use of salaried, appointed officials to collect taxes (as opposed to contracted collection services) and an end to the oppression and injustice leveled against the *reaya*. Like his predecessors, Sari Mehmet wrote that it was the improper administration of taxes that gave rise to oppression, since the complex system of tax collection through third parties burdened the *reaya* with increased taxes in order to line the pockets of the contracted tax collectors. Additionally, the confiscation of private wealth in order to supplement the royal treasury merely made property insecure and led to the oppression of people who were the main generators of wealth in the land. Somewhat uniquely, Sari Mehmet also advocated for an extended tenure for the chief treasurer due to the harm generated to good administration by continuous turnover, and he argued for an autonomous treasurer free to implement policy and act as he saw fit, but with the complete confidence of the Grand Vizier.

Sari Mehmet's reforms had to begin at the top of the administrative hierarchy but a return to the state of affairs that prevailed under Süleyman the Magnificent was impossible. So, reform would need to be accepted throughout the Ottoman administrative bu-

reaucracy. However, reform went unrealized. Sarı Mehmet Pasha fell prey to the machinations of the court and, under unsubstantiated accusations of bribery and embezzlement, he was executed in 1717 and all his property was confiscated.⁷

POLITICAL TESTAMENT (*TESTAMENT POLITIQUE*)

Shortly before his death, Âli Pasha (1815–1871), a high-level Ottoman official and one of the last Ottoman statesmen to write of his concerns over the Empire's survival, composed a *Political Testament*. He presented it to Sultan Abdülaziz (1860–1876) and gave full account of his deeds as Grand Vizier, leaving a blueprint for a future course of action and reforms needed to save the Empire. It is not known what happened to the *Testament* between its presentation to the Sultan and its publication in the French *Revue de Paris* in 1910. What is known, however, is that those who succeeded Âli Pasha implemented none of his recommendations and his *Testament* fell victim to a conspiracy of silence.

In it, Âli Pasha tackled a variety of acute problems plaguing the Empire. Regarding public administration, he noted two major problems: disorganization within the various administrative branches caused by a constant turnover of personnel and low morale amongst public officials due to compensation commensurate not with their office but with the influence of their patrons. He described the reforms he and his colleagues (Mustafa Reşit Pasha and Fuad Pasha) carried out to address these problems and detailed recommendations for further, required reforms. These included assurance given to dedicated civil servants of their present and future positions in order to retain skilled and talented men in the service of the Empire. Otherwise, these men would look elsewhere, outside the public sector, for their livelihood, forcing the state to rely on less skilled personnel.

He also described the injustice and inequity of the tax system. While some progressive measures were taken in his time, especially regarding property taxes and securing property rights, his ideas on

⁷ For the full text, see Walter L. Wright, *Ottoman Statecraft: The Book of Counsels for Viziers and Governors*. Bilingual edition, Turkish and English. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1935.

an equitable tax system and how to achieve it were never implemented. He wrote that more so than in any other department or government organization, good order and discipline were necessary in the Ministry of Finance, which controlled the collection and spending of revenues. To this end, he recommended the implementation of a budgetary system, which, once determined and approved, would allow the Ministry of Finance to allocate revenues amongst the various services and government organizations. The budget would not be altered by any other ministry or even by the Sultan and to ensure accountability, funds would not be diverted from their approved and initially allocated purpose.

Most radical, though, were Âli Pasha's recommendations regarding public enterprises (state owned industry), which were also fraught with problems. Often, the managers in charge were indifferent to the well-being of the state or its governing organizations. They corruptly pursued only their self-interest, causing the enterprises under their supervision, and therefore the state's industrial capacity as a whole, to fail. With this in mind, he recommended the encouragement of private industrial enterprises and investment. He urged the introduction of European techniques to revive industry and to train personnel, believing this would establish incentives leading people, and thereby the state, to increased wealth.

Âli Pasha's views on what was required regarding economic, social and financial reform in the Ottoman Empire are of great importance and, reflecting this, they are covered in a separate chapter in this book. The novelty of his recommending the adoption of contemporary, European ways of governing and doing business is unique compared to previous counsels. It is mentioned here simply to maintain the chronology of proposed reforms.⁸

⁸ For the full text see "Testament Politique," *La Revue de Paris*, Vol.17, No.7, April 1910, pp. 505–524 and Vol. 17, No. 9, May 1910, pp. 105–124. For the English translation of the *Testament* see Fuat Andic and Suphan Andic, *The Last Man of the Ottoman Grandees*. Istanbul: The ISIS Press, and Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2012, pp. 33–61.

THE COUNSELS IN CONTEXT

The Ottoman Empire was a strong centralist state, insulated to a great degree from societal pressures; a near-perfect absolute monarchy lording over what was, in essence, a command economy. The state penetrated and managed society, regulated social relationships, appropriated resources to serve its desired end and objectives based on its own preference function, dominated as it was by status-oriented rather than market-oriented values.⁹ The state's utility function was composed of revenues and supplies, so its economic policies were focused on the maximization of tax yields from the rural economy, and not on investment in public works that would improve the operating conditions of this rural economy. Through its policies of price control and concessions granted to foreign exporters of foodstuffs and other consumer goods in the form of reduced import duties it attempted to assure that there would always be sufficient supplies.

The Sultan was the center of this absolute monarchy and the head of an Islamic polity who maintained *sharia* (Islamic religious law) as the basis of justice within the Empire and waged external military campaigns to expand the boundaries of Islam. To achieve both, he required stable control over his realm, loyal and competent officials and abundant financial resources, which he acquired by acting as a discriminating monopolist. He discriminated in favor of a small elite group, whose loyalty to the Sultan was vital, and against the great mass of the rural population from whom he derived the financial means to run the Empire. The state's total ownership of all cultivable land (and, therefore, its total control of the system of property rights) undergirded the division of society in two: one exempt from taxation and the other exploited through ever-increasing tax burdens. The former stratum of society was composed of the ruling military-administrative elite, to whom the Sultan delegated executive power (primarily officers of the palace and the army, civil servants, jurists and theologians) and who he

⁹ E. Özbudun, "The Ottoman Legacy and the Middle East State Tradition," L. Carl Brown ed., *The Imperial Legacy: The Ottoman Imprint on the Balkans and the Middle East*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1996. pp. 133–134.

exempted from taxation, so long as they faithfully carried out their assigned duties. The other stratum was composed of the exploited, tax paying subjects; Moslems and non-Moslems who had no role in the government, but whose mostly agricultural output formed the basis of the tax revenue that sustained the Sultan, his court and the entire administrative system of the Empire.

The dominant socio-economic organizing model throughout the Ottoman Empire's history was an agrarian one defined by a patchwork of small, family farms on state-owned land. It remained unchanged for centuries and because this model prevented the development of small peasant farms into larger, more efficient estates, it constituted the crucial factor in the stagnation and decline of the Empire.¹⁰ The total resistance to changing the property rights system to achieve more efficient production, combined with the Ottoman rulers' indifference to investment in and use of new and better production technology and methods kept the structural production frontier well below the potential technical frontier and, therefore, impeded growth and denied the maximization of national wealth.¹¹ This led to a repeated decline in the base that provided revenue for the palace to function, which in turn forced the government to resort to confiscatory measures for revenue collection and generated agency organizations dedicated to maximizing their own utility functions at the expense of the state.

The multi-level, administrative bureaucracy consisted of agents possessing delegated authority and responsible for fiscal functions (such as tax collection), political functions, the provision of safety and security and the maintenance of religious organizations and law, which was the purview of jurists and theologians, including the staff of the mosques, teachers in theological schools,

¹⁰ Such changes and greater cultivation did not emerge until the state's hold on property rights was chiseled away and a rival property right structure established. See İnalçık, "Meaning of Legacy. The Ottoman Case," Brown, *op. cit.*, pp.17-29.

¹¹ See İslâmoğlu-Inan, *State and Peasant in the Ottoman Empire*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994; Bernard Lewis, "Some Reflections on the Decline of the Ottoman Empire," *Studia Islamica*. Vol. 9, 1957, pp., 111-127; and Charles Issawi, "The Economic Legacy," Brown, *op.cit.*, pp. 227-245.

judges (*kadis*) and canonical interpreters (*müftüs*) of matters related to marriage, inheritance and divorce according to *sharia*. This ruling bureaucracy was headed by the Grand Vizier, who represented the Sultan in matters of state and was utterly dependent upon him for continued power and influence. So long as he enjoyed the Sultan's confidence, he had absolute authority over the ruling organization. Separate from the ruling organization, the learned organization was headed by the *Sheikhulislâm* (the senior cleric responsible for upholding *sharia*) who saw to it that the laws of the state did not contravene *sharia*. He was appointed by the Sultan, whose temporal authority dominated religion, rather than the other way. So the Sultan maintained his right to enact law however he saw fit and could, at any moment, remove the *Sheikhulislâm* from his post. In contrast to the situation in the Europe at the time, the religious class of the Ottoman Empire did not have a unique corporate identity, separate from the state that enabled it to play a moderating role between the state and the individual. Instead, it was beholden to the state and depended upon it for authority appointments, promotions and salaries.¹²

This initial organizational system grew and served the Sultan well, but over time it became dysfunctional due to agency problems and increasing transaction costs caused by changes in the technological environment.

The Sultan's behavior as a discriminating monopolist was primarily a financial strategy that assured the maximization of wealth accruing to his treasury. By providing a livelihood for select members of the military through the military fief and large fief system, he did away with the need for a standing military force and the treasury was relieved of the burden of tax collection and the payment of troops in cash, and therefore reduced transaction costs. This arrangement also elevated the status of the fief administrators because the right to collect taxes and dues gave them seigniorial jurisdiction over the peasants. The Sultan, by discriminating against the taxpayers in favor of the fief holding military men, maintained the allegiance of the latter, whose services he needed for imperial

¹² Özbudun, *op. cit.*, pp. 136, 142.

warfare and conquest, through which revenues accruing to the treasury were increased.

The fief system was an agency relationship in which authority and rights over resources were delegated to an agent: the fief administrators who were bound by unwritten contract to represent the Sultan's interests in return for payment. This system assured the loyalty of military forces because the fief holders' lands were not their property, but belonged to the Sultan. They held authority over the property only due to their office. And although the holdings could be transferred to sons upon a fief holder's death, they could also be taken away by the Sultan, since all land was, by law, his property. In this way, there was no security in property rights as any accumulated wealth could not be converted into permanent economic assets, such as land, livestock or capital investment. The system exposed the monarchy to little danger from the potential rivalry of the fief holders. However, the fief holders had, as all agents do, their own utility functions that they aimed to maximize and not necessarily to coincide with that of the Sultan. The fief-holding military officers were reluctant to give up their holdings, as well as the revenue these provided, and were eager to return to such holdings after waging war for the Sultan.

Whether such preferences and accompanying decisions were optimal from the Sultan's point of view depended upon the imposition by the principal of an effective and forceful system of monitoring on the agent. However, enforcement and monitoring of the transactions between the Sultan and his fief holding agents was not without cost. There was asymmetry of information between the Sultan and his agents in that information was more easily accessible to the latter than the former primarily due to the vastness of the Empire. This asymmetry grew over time and agents took ever-greater advantage of the high cost of measuring their performance for the purpose of contract enforcement and accountability, engaging in opportunistic behavior to enhance their own welfare at the expense of the state and the peasantry. As asymmetry increased, so too did the cost of enforcing property rights that favored the Sultan and this in turn eroded the state's authority and chiseled away at its property rights. This permitted the establishment of alternative property rights structures that rivaled those of the state, rendering ineffective (from the point of view of the Sultan and the Ottoman state) the fief holder system. Amongst the changes

wrought by high transaction costs and asymmetric access to information, sub-state socio-political structures formed, further challenging the Sultan's authority. Such agency and organizational problems, combined with technological and political changes, had disastrous fiscal implications and led to the downfall of the Sultan's monopolistic hold on the Empire.

Another factor that had drastic implications for the principal-agent relationship was the changes that occurred within the imperial household.¹³ Rivals to the ruling sultan surfaced within the dynasty. Conflicts over power within the palace among male members of the Sultan's family led to the weakening of the Sultan's authority, a schism between the Sultan and the Grand Vizier (the most important principal-agent relationship in the Empire) and to petty struggles throughout the ruling organization, with profound and negative effects on the military and bureaucracy. Offices became seats of influence and favor; separate centers of power. Revenue-producing positions of the state offered material rewards and were therefore purchased and used to amass private fortunes.

Sub-state structures that developed in the provinces also altered the principal-agent relationship with negative implications for the Sultan's treasury. The administration of the Empire and of the Sultan's court was in the hands of those trained in the palace, who were also the Sultan's agents in the provinces, communicating all the pertinent information to the palace. The Sultan ruled and controlled the Empire through such delegation of authority and reliance on representatives, but the delegation of authority became a double-edged sword: it enhanced the Sultan's control, but he was dependent on information relayed to him by his agents. The implications for asymmetry of information were clear. The officials

¹³ The Ottoman ruling households were *sui generis* organizational units. They combined private and public spheres: family and government. They cut across social functions and social groups, and organizationally linked the Sultan and his officials with their families, slaves, administrators and laborers. They replicated power and influence through a combination of material and cultural capital, social ties and networks and knowledge. See Fatma Müge Göçek, *Rise of the Bourgeoisie, Demise of Empire*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996, pp.22–28.

(agents) developed their own ties within and without the imperial household. As these increased in strength, the authority of the Sultan eroded further.

The widespread use of personal agents and elite alliances in the service of private interests caused power to oscillate between center and the provinces. Taking advantage of the Sultan's weak control, large fief-holders began to ignore their military obligations and expanded their holdings to maximize revenue for personal enrichment. Collaboration emerged between them and the ruling elite but it was focused on shortsighted policies that brought in revenue and stifled broader, Empire-wide progress.¹⁴ Powerful members of the ruling organization were able to build large estates by illegally transforming their fiefs or tax farms into religious foundations (*vakıfs*), thereby escaping any tax liability. A new class of rural notables (*ayans*) emerged in the provinces and the imperial court became dependent on them to maintain influence and authority in the Empire's outer reaches. They were accompanied by a new class of landless peasants who fled oppression and over-taxation on the lands they were cultivating. These peasants did not, however, escape exploitation by the new large estate holders, who ignored state control over their operations and were able to keep their lands' entire product for themselves. They used their wealth to build their own armies to protect their interests. The provincial garrisons manned by Janissaries, standing cavalry corps and palace guards attempted to prevent this development, but in the process they formed alliances with the estate holders. In many distant provinces, they came to dominate political and economic life, appropriated most of the state revenues for themselves and came to form the dominant ruling class. Agents of the government were thus able to behave in an opportunistic manner, seized state-owned land and became private estate owners and notables. The principal-agent relationship deteriorated and the Sultan's power was gradually chiseled away. The Ottoman statesmen and scholars who wrote the

¹⁴ Bruce McGowan, "The Age of the *Ayans* 1689–1812," Halil İnalcık & Donald Quatert, ed., *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300–1914*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994. Vol. 2, p. 642.

aforementioned counsels witnessed this course of events, noted it and described it as a departure of the Sultan from his duties and a fundamental cause of the Empire's decline.

Another form of opportunistic behavior of the provincial agents was to establish networks and alliances with the Sultans' entourage through marriage and friendship that enhanced their economic and social standing and undermined the Sultan's decision-making power. Additionally, local, influential personalities, who, in the sixteenth century, had been intermediaries between the townspeople and the Ottoman state, forged coalitions with like-minded counterparts throughout the Empire's provinces, further drawing power away from the Sultan and the center. Increased power and influence, and increased wealth after the fief system was transformed into a system of contracted tax farms, paved the way for this new influential group to build themselves a constituency in the towns and cities of the provinces, from which they derived legitimacy that the Sultan could not withdraw or significantly affect. With the escalation of military fiefs to tax farms, provincial notables gained access to social and economic resources which increased significantly after their appointment as tax farmers. They invested most of this wealth in urban property over which the Sultan had no property right. Moreover, by becoming representatives of the subjects in their provinces vis-à-vis the state, they began to draw their legitimacy not from the Sultan alone, but also from their constituents. This the Sultan could not effectively challenge. By the end of the eighteenth century, the hierarchies of notables were challenging the government's authority in and control of increasingly large geographical areas. They ultimately won, for when the Sultan could no longer maintain personal patronage ties, the concept of allegiance to the Sultan himself was replaced with allegiance to the Sultanate, or the state more broadly.

This sub-state structure that brought power to the *ayans* did not at first change the reality of the Sultan's absolute rule because it lacked legal basis and political legitimacy and did not threaten to topple the Sultan. The state was not captive to a particular social class and could make decisions to change, eliminate or create class

relationships.¹⁵ So long as the household remained the organizing principle of the Empire, the Sultan was able to maintain control over its social structure. However, the complex social links between the state and the *ayans*, and networks of growing and distinct centers of power, often eluded and undermined the Sultan's control, made his rule precarious and created opportunistic and self-serving behavior on the part of the agents who provided public services and collected taxes. As a result, these agents amassed considerable wealth, influence and power through predatory finance, which took two forms: the reduction of revenues flowing to the state and the exploitation of the *raya*.

During its years of territorial expansion, the Empire replenished its treasury through the spoils of war and taxation. However, once expansion stagnated, state revenues dwindled but expenditures continued to rise. The state began frequently to resort to emergency taxation and confiscatory measures, as well as the debasement of the currency, which resulted in inflation and compounded the problems of fiscal management. The ills of such measures and poor financial management were observed by all the Ottoman writers from the end of the sixteenth to the end of the nineteenth century, to which their previously examined writings attest. Although they did not refer to all the ill effects on the economy of this method of financing a government, their observation of the phenomenon and their recommendations to curtail rising government expenditures are certainly noteworthy. In particular, Sarı Mehmed Pasha, Koçi Bey, Naima and Âli Pasha correctly linked bad financial management to the rise of corruption and the erosion of property rights.

A government that uses confiscation and appropriation of property as one source of revenue among other methods of extortion cannot encourage the long-term investments necessary to generate economic growth, social advancement and rising standards of living, for under such a system, property rights are insecure. The security of such rights in the present, as well as confidence in their continued security in the future, is of critical importance to the performance of the economy but public finance through predatory

¹⁵ See Özbudun, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

means undermines such security and creates a *de facto* system of incomplete and insecure property rights. Individuals seeking to maximize their utility (most often in this case, wealth and power) react to such circumstances with behavioral adjustments aimed at minimizing the risk of appropriation of property; adjustments that reduce the amount and change the nature of investment (and therefore inhibit future economic growth). In other words, predatory public finance moves the economy's structural production frontier below the technical production frontier, resulting in a deficit between what is actual and what is possible in terms of production. There is ample historical evidence to show that predatory public finance often shrinks the state's tax base, reduces its revenues and contributes to economic decline. The trajectory of the Ottoman Empire is a case in point.

Twentieth-century historians cite most frequently predatory finance, taxation by extortion and over-taxation of farmers as the primary causes of popular misery, flight from the land, reduced agricultural production and the loss of prosperity in the Ottoman Empire, where the economy and public finances fundamentally depended on state ownership of land. In the Ottoman Empire, agriculture was the most important economic activity and agricultural production the main source of wealth. Its economy was one in which military organization, civil administration, taxation and land tenure were geared to the needs of a society expanding through conquest and colonization.¹⁶ Lands annexed by conquest were the sources of new tax revenue in the form of fiefs, some of

¹⁶ See H.A.R. Gibb & Harold Bowen, *Islamic Society and the West Vol. 1, Islamic Society in the Eighteenth Century*; London: Oxford University Press, Part 1 1950, Part 2, 1957. İnalcık, "L'Empire Ottoman," and *Ottoman Empire*; Lewis, "Some Reflections;" *op. cit.* Stanford Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*. New York: Cambridge University Press, Vol. 1, 1976. See also Linda Darling, *Revenue Raising and Legitimacy: Tax Collection and Finance Administration in the Ottoman Empire, 1560-1660*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996, pp.14-15, who, while not denying the contention, takes the stand that considers oppressive Ottoman taxation a problem solving effort motivated by a state faced with difficulties. This does not, however, do away with the fact that such taxation and revenue extraction were, indeed, oppressive.

which were gradually converted into imperial property so that revenue from them flowed into the imperial rather than state treasury. No attention was paid to the generation of greater tax revenue through economic investment that would have raised agricultural output.

Changes to the relationship between the military and the land, which were initially due to technical and logistical changes in Europe, gave rise to new organizations and negatively affected revenues. One such change was the introduction in the West of stouter seafaring vessels, accompanied by better, more skillful seamanship. This exacerbated the Ottoman Empire's poor revenue situation by encouraging the gradual dwindling of trade coming from South Asia through Red Sea ports controlled by Empire, thereby reducing the revenue derived from commercial levies. The Ottomans' tardy adoption of new techniques led to a general deterioration in professional standards. But adoption, tardy or not, necessitated the maintenance of ever larger, more professional armies and reduced the relative importance of the feudal cavalry. The cavalry used to reside near their fiefdom, which they worked, in which they had hereditary interest and from which they provided revenues to the state. With the cavalry's loss of significance, many fiefs were awarded to palace favorites and speculators. Others became imperial property. Over time they fell into the hands of absentee owners who sometimes accumulated great numbers of them and whose self-interest was to maximize that portion of collected taxes that they withheld for themselves. As a result, the agrarian system collapsed. With it, revenues declined at a time when the need for revenues was increasing.

The new organizations demanded different methods of collection with higher transaction costs and reduced yields. They became self-defeating because of constraints determined by political conditions, agency problems and measurement costs. The transaction costs of the assessment and collection of taxes were too high for the inefficient bureaucracy, so new agents emerged. These became the tax farmers, whose confiscation of revenues became, over the years, a hereditary right, adding to the number of neglected es-

tates.¹⁷ The fall in revenues and soaring expenditures caused deficits to skyrocket.

The squeezing-out of the feudal cavalry and their replacement by tax farmers and leaseholders explains much of the decline in agriculture. Given the chronic insecurity of property rights, the short-term, opportunistic objective of those in charge of collecting revenues to maximize their wealth is understandable.¹⁸ With their own property and income at risk of confiscation by the state, they had no concern for the long-term interests and welfare of the agrarian population and, consequently, for the very foundation of the economy. Therefore, the optimization of their utility functions enabled predatory finance. Their harsh, exorbitant and rapacious taxation of the peasantry led to the deterioration of agricultural cultivation and often forced them off the land.

¹⁷ Tax farming was a contractual arrangement for the collection of taxes, including the poll tax on Moslems (*baraç*) and income taxes from monopolies and state enterprises. The contract stipulated that the tax farmer would deliver to the treasury a certain amount of money in regular installments during the time period agreed upon (and sometimes in advance), which was usually three years. In order to maximize the revenue to the treasury, its collection was auctioned off to competitive bidders. The risk and effort involved in collection (that is, the cost of collection) was transferred from the state to the tax farmer. There also appeared a system of life-term tax farm leases, which were intended to ease the lives of the peasantry and reserve their revenue potential. However, the result was the exclusion from taxation of numerous land grants, which, owing to collusion between the life-term lessee and corrupt officials, never returned to the public domain. See İnalçık, "The Ottoman State: Economy and Society," İnalçık & Quatert, *op. cit.*, pp. 9-409 and McGowan, *op. cit.*, p. 661.

¹⁸ The Sultan maintained the right to and did confiscate the revenues accruing to the fiefs, though this practice decreased over time. Also, as an extraordinary measure to meet the treasury's needs, confiscation of the surpluses of *vakıfs* was not rare (especially during imperial campaigns, when confiscations of all kinds increased due to acute deficits). Confiscation of wealth also took place when wealthy bureaucrats were dismissed from office. Confiscations, together with forced taxation, were instruments the Sultan used to control the provincial upper class. As a result, some perished completely, but others evaded the Sultan's orders through official corruption. See Göçek, *op. cit.*, pp. 92-171.

Tax farmers and leaseholders alone did not engage in such oppression. Fief holders, government agents, private contractors, state tax collectors, bandits and unemployed peasants were all involved in extracting the most out of the tax paying farmers, who were the only class that paid the great variety of taxes. There was constant conflict between the fief holders and the peasants over taxes and the method of collection. The former tried to exact ever-greater services from the peasants for their own farms and vineyards, and transferred land titles illegally to increase holdings and, therefore, the fees to be collected. Although the peasants tried to fend off this practice, the fief holders succeeded in converting such holdings into legitimate extra taxes and were thus able to impose additional taxation on the peasants. The state itself levied emergency fees, especially during times of war, and demanded a multitude of additional services and taxes. Over time, many extraordinary taxes were transformed into regular cash taxes and became another factor in destabilizing the peasant class and devastated the agricultural base of the Empire's economy.¹⁹ Also, when Ottoman troops passed through an area on their way to a campaign, provisional levies were exacted from the population (in addition to the pillage and foraging by the transiting soldiers). This too encouraged flight from the land and contributed to a sharp decline in agricultural output.

The cost for the central government was too high to exercise any check or control. The state aimed to reduce the transaction costs of revenue collection and disbursement by eliminating the need for salaried tax collectors and instituting the system of tax

¹⁹ It is interesting to note that the Grand Vizier of Sultan Murad III (1574-1595) advised against the war with Persia, stating that the *reaya* would be oppressed through higher taxes and mistreatment by soldiers, and revenue collections would decline and not be sufficient to meet the rising expenditures the invasion would require. See İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Ottoman History (Osmanlı Tarihi)*, Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1988. Vol. 4, p.58 and İbrahim Peçevi, *History of Peçevi (Peçevi Tarihi)*, Istanbul: Neşriyat Yurdu., 1968 (revised edition), pp. 275-278. This early seventeenth-century advisor was, however, unable to override palace intrigues and had to submit to forces in favor of war.

farming.²⁰ However, the extreme asymmetry of information between the principal and the agent (that is, the state and the contracted tax collector), the high cost for the principal to obtain this information and the high cost to enforce any contract with the agent, necessitated wealth maximization for the principal including the acceptance of dissipation on the part of the agent. In other words, the acceptance of whatever the tax collectors deemed pertinent to give to the treasury. This, however, undermined the very system set up to address the costs of collection in the first place. No long-term or large-scale investment could be undertaken and consistently primitive techniques of production and transportation meant the Ottoman economy remained at a structural production frontier that corresponded to a low level of competency and initiative (especially when compared to other contemporary states, such as those in Europe).

Due to these changes in the Ottoman system, a tremendous amount of wealth was amassed by the agents. Its origin, of course, was not legitimate economic production or productive investment; rather it was amassed through political ties and by holding of public office. Because of the existing system of property rights, which left urban property outside the control of the state (except in the case of confiscations) and because of the loopholes that allowed for tax avoidance through the establishment or funding of religious trusts, most of the amassed wealth was destined for trade or leisure. It was not channeled into investment that would have increased national output. The question is frequently asked: where did the wealth of the Ottoman Empire go? One answer is on mosque construction.²¹

²⁰ Attempts were also made to reduce transaction costs by assigning the management of state enterprises to private contractors who were given monopoly power. This was a kind of joint venture in that the private contractor invested capital while the state provided labor and protected the monopoly and its profits. It was a financially autonomous arrangement because the agent, or the tax farmer, sold the produce to private traders, who transported it by their own means.

²¹ In the mid-seventeenth century in Istanbul alone there were over 5,000 mosques of different sizes, each with their respective *vakıfs*. Aghia Sophia was the largest *vakıf*, supported by the city's tariffs, the main bazaar and houses erected outside the city walls. Moreover, the mere protec-

However, it should be noted that the *vakıfs* engaged mostly in charitable activities and religious education and did undertake public infrastructure works that the state neglected to carry out. They also occasionally engaged in commercial activities. However, these were poor substitutes for corporate entities, because the vast majority was notoriously mismanaged.²²

The need to acquire additional revenue in the face of the rising cost of warfare rooted in new military technologies and the financing of a larger military led the Empire to more frequent outright confiscations and additional emergency taxes, which in time became regular (and permanent) levies. These measures were self-defeating. Agricultural production declined still further, substantially narrowing the tax base and swelling deficits. The consequences were copious: unsolved fiscal crises, bankruptcies, confiscations, insecure property rights and three centuries of stagnation. They became further impediments to capital accumulation and productive investment. The depopulation of the countryside in the early seventeenth century, coupled with revolts and ineffective state institutions, asphyxiated industry while the centralized bureaucracy administered an ever-growing body of decrees and directives. Both increased transaction costs astronomically. In essence, every detail of the economy, as well as the polity, was structured with the objective of furthering the interests of the principal. Matters were arranged in such a way to outwardly give the appearance that the agents were representing the principal's interest. Inwardly, however, they were pursuing a course of action contrary to those interests. This eroded the very foundation of the Empire's economic arrangement. To counteract it, the principal attempted to regulate (in fact, over-regulate) the economy, thereby stifling growth and further increasing transaction costs.

tion of the pilgrim route to Mecca financed from various sources, including *vakıfs*, absorbed 10-17 percent of government revenue. See Philip Mansel, *Constantinople*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996, pp. 34, 36, 42. Characteristic civic structures of the seventeenth century included libraries, schools, public baths, fountains and shoreline pavilions. See McGowan, *op. cit.*, p. 640.

²² Issawi, *op. cit.*, p. 231.

The consequences of predatory finance undermining property rights and the constant antagonism between the principal and the agent led to an interventionist and pervasively arbitrary institutional environment that ended in highly politicized kinship networks. Political influence and family prestige were leveraged to gain privileged access to contracts in order to evade taxes and defend or assert titles to land, which ultimately became destructive to the entire Ottoman system after the reign of Süleyman the Magnificent. The military, the judiciary and the complex bureaucracy — massive as each was — provided ample opportunities for organizational corruption. Success or failure came to depend only on a relationship with political authorities: local officials for arranging matters close at hand and the central government for sympathetic interpretations of the law. Those excluded from the system of privileges and political favors remained at the margin of the law, at the mercy of petty officials, never secure from arbitrary acts and never protected against the rights of those more powerful. Personal relationships became the key to much of economic exchange. They were neither a consequence of an organizational framework that produced neither political stability nor the realization of the prevailing knowledge. Those who played financial and economic role in the Empire's economy were segmented and the institutions were such that they could not be integrated to build a solid financial structure to overcome the chronic fiscal crisis.

All the Ottoman writers whose works were discussed in this chapter observed and astutely diagnosed the ills that afflicted the Empire, but they did not do so within a theoretical frame of reference. Additionally, their acute observations and recommendations were never realized as actual reforms — the rigidity of the Ottoman state could not permit such change.²³ Nevertheless, their views can be seen as precursors to neo-institutional economics.

²³ It would not be fair to expect these writers to use such a theoretical framework. By reporting the surface evidence of the decline of the Ottoman Empire, they provided data that now allow one to put the pieces together to understand the underlying institutional economic dynamics. It is interesting that they had a general understanding of “decline”, something modern western writers, imbued as they are with nineteenth-century

ideologies of growth, expansion and development, are not good at. Among the classic Western historians, only Gibbon could expound upon "decline" in a systematic fashion.

1699–1718: DEFEAT AND DECLINE

THE TREATY OF KARLOWITZ

The sixteen-year war between the Ottoman Empire and the Holy League (a coalition of the Holy Roman Empire, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Republic of Venice and Tsarist Russia) ended on January 26, 1699, with the signing of the Treaty of Karlowitz. The basis of the treaty was the principle of *uti possidetis*, meaning the belligerents were entitled to keep whatever they acquired through conflict. As a result, the Ottoman Empire lost considerable territory. The Hapsburg Monarchy received a large tract of land including Budin (today's Budapest) and Poland received two cities and their adjacent agricultural lands in what is today the Ukraine. Much of the Dalmatian coast was annexed to Venice, though in exchange Venice returned the Peninsula of Corinth to the Ottomans. The total territorial loss corresponded to much of what is today Hungary, Croatia, Slovenia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. The loss of these territories cost the Ottoman treasury significantly in terms of revenue.¹ More important than the economic loss to the Empire, the treaty marked the beginning of the decline of the Ottoman Empire as it ceased to be the unquestioned hegemon in Eastern Europe and the Balkans. The Hapsburgs and their Austro-Hungarian Empire were on their way to replacing the Ottomans.

The Sultan at the time was Mustafa II and the Ottoman defeat at the Battle of Zenta convinced him that radical changes were necessary in order for the Empire to maintain its position in Europe. He charged his Grand Vizier, Köprülü Hüseyin Pasha, to

¹ See Gabriel Noradounghian, *Recueil d'actes internationaux de l'Empire Ottoman*. Paris: Pichon 1897. Vol. 1, pp. 182–193.

embark on military, naval and financial reforms, with the restructuring of the Janissary Order the most urgent necessity. To that end on July 1701 the Sultan issued an edict that stated:

“it is observed that during wartime, some peasants don uniforms and feign to be janissaries... not only in war zones... but appearing as janissaries, they also act as brigands in different parts of the country, thereby eroding public order and security... The janissary records should be reviewed and those who are in the records but neither serve on the military fronts nor participate in training, and yet continue to receive payment as janissaries, should be removed from the rolls once and for all...”²

The Grand Vizier reduced the janissaries' numbers to 34,000, half their pre-war level, and the number of soldiers in the gunner corps (*cebeci*) was slashed from 60,000 to 2,400. Considering that each janissary received 3–8 aspers a day and 30 aspers annually for each arrow he was given, the budgetary savings were considerable.³ The navy was also dramatically restructured as oar-propelled war ships were replaced with sail ships.

While these efforts were the first significant attempts at the reorganization of the military, they did not bear fruit; nor did subsequent ones. The janissaries continued to meddle in the affairs of state until they were completely eliminated by Mahmud II in 1826.⁴

² See Uzunçarşılı, *op. cit.*, p.8.

³ See N. Jorga, *Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches nach den Quellen dargestellt*. Gotha, 1908–1913, Vol. 5, p. 330.

⁴ The janissaries were fully aware of their importance in the management of public administration. They had already become a state within a state. See Jorga, *op. cit.*, p. 230. This state of affairs was attested to by Lady Montagu in her letter from Edirne to Countess of Bristol dated April 1, 1717, in which she mentions that the government is in the hands of the army and that the Sultan is fearful of the janissaries. See Mary Wortley Montagu, *Letters from the Levant during the Embassy to Constantinople, 1716–1718*. New York, 1971 (reprint of the 1838 edition), p. 118.

THE TREATY OF PASSAROWITZ

Still more misfortune and defeat ensured the continued decline of the Ottoman Empire. In 1700 the Triple Alliance of Denmark, Poland-Lithuania and Russia invaded the Swedish territory of Holstein-Gottorp and Ingria. The king of Sweden, Karl XII, was young, courageous and militarily astute and initially the war proceeded in Sweden's favor. However, on July 8, 1709, King Karl lost the battle against the forces of Tsar Peter the Great at Poltava (today in eastern Ukraine) and to avoid capture, Karl took refuge in Ottoman territory. The Tsar demanded his surrender to Russian forces, but the Ottoman Government flatly refused in accordance with a centuries-old Turkish custom whereby a refugee was considered an honored guest. It would have been beneath the dignity of the Empire to return the refugee King Karl to his enemies.

As a result, Russia declared war against the Ottoman Empire in December 1710. The Ottoman army quickly gained the upper hand. In July 1711, the Russians surrendered all their fortifications north of the Black Sea to Ottoman forces. However, embittered by the defeat and unwilling to completely accept surrender, Russia encouraged Montenegro, which then was an Ottoman Province, to rebel. The rebellion started in 1714 but, once again, Ottoman forces were victorious and forced the rebels to take refuge in the Republic of Venice. Heartened by this victory and encouraged by many of his advisors, Sultan Ahmed III declared war on Venice in order to regain Morea (the Peloponnese Peninsula of modern Greece), which he succeeded in doing. However, the Sultan's entourage also incited a third siege of Vienna. Austria, seeking to prevent the outright defeat of Venice and the siege of Vienna, entered the war in 1716 and quickly raised the specter of Ottoman defeat. Rout after rout reduced the Ottoman army to a handful of forces until the final blow came at the battle of Petrovaradin. Austrian troops under the command of Prince Eugene of Savoy won a decisive victory and the Ottomans had no recourse but to sue for peace. The negotiations between the Ottoman and the Austrian-Venetian alliance were carried in the town of Passarowitz (in modern Serbia) until a peace treaty was signed in July 1718.

The treaty had serious consequences for the Ottoman Empire, not only with respect to large territorial loss, but also by opening the door to foreign powers to intervene in its internal affairs. The Dalmatian Coast was ceded to the Republic of Venice but Mo-

rea remained Ottoman territory. Huge swaths of territory, including the rest of Ottoman Hungary, all of Serbia (except the fortress at Belgrade), and major parts of Wallachia, Bosnia and West Herzegovina, were surrendered to the Austrians. Additionally, according to a trade agreement signed six days after the treaty, Austria extracted from the Ottomans the exclusive right to commercial traffic on the Danube and all other Ottoman rivers, provided their ships did not enter the Black Sea. A number of Austrian goods exported to the Ottoman Empire were exempted from import duties and on others the duty was limited to three percent. Austria also obtained the right to establish consulates in any Ottoman city. These consulates could have their own churches, courts and police force available for affairs related to its citizens residing within Ottoman boundaries. Even their Ottoman interpreters could benefit from these rights.⁵ It was clear that Austria was not only interested in enlarging its territory and acquiring trade advantages, but the Austrian Emperor was also convinced he had a divine mandate to liberate the Christians of the East "from the infidel Turks."⁶ Grand Vizier İbrahim Pasha, the chief Ottoman negotiator, felt he had not been vested with the authority to sign the treaty and sought the written permission of the Sultan. In a letter addressed to Sultan Ahmed III, he wrote,

"My Imperial Majesty, were I to be vested with the authority to sign a treaty I believed acceptable, I would not hesitate to sign it. I beg your explicit permission to do so. Your Majesty is aware of our soldiers' situation: if 10,000 enemy soldiers attack 100,000 of ours, our soldiers would desert the field of battle and retreat instead of resisting and fighting. Austrian forces numbering 40–50,000 are in the Zemlin Valley close to Belgrade. Under these conditions I have no recourse but to beg Your Majesty to permit me to sign the treaty."

Sultan Ahmed III, desiring peace, responded to İbrahim Pasha, "I am very happy to learn that the decision has been made to establish

⁵ See Noradounghian, *op.cit.*, pp. 216–220.

⁶ See Lavander Cassels, *The Struggle for the Ottoman Empire, 1717–1740*. New York, 1967, p. 19.

peace. God willing, it is an auspicious sign.” Subsequently the Sultan sent another letter to his Grand Vizier in which he reiterated his position, “Peace is reasonable and appropriate. This imperial letter reiterates the previous one and I order you to sign the peace treaty.”⁷

After signing the treaty, İbrahim Pasha returned to Istanbul convinced that radical reform, maintaining peace, mastering the technology of Europe and improved war-fighting capabilities were all urgently required if the Empire was to survive. In order to realize such reform, he required the explicit and unyielding trust of the Sultan, and assurances that the habit of earlier sultans changing their Grand Viziers as readily as they did their shirts was over. With İbrahim Pasha as Grand Vizier, the first and only renaissance of the Ottoman Empire, commonly known as the Tulip Era, was about to begin.

⁷ See Uzunçarşılı, *op.cit.*, pp. 142–144.

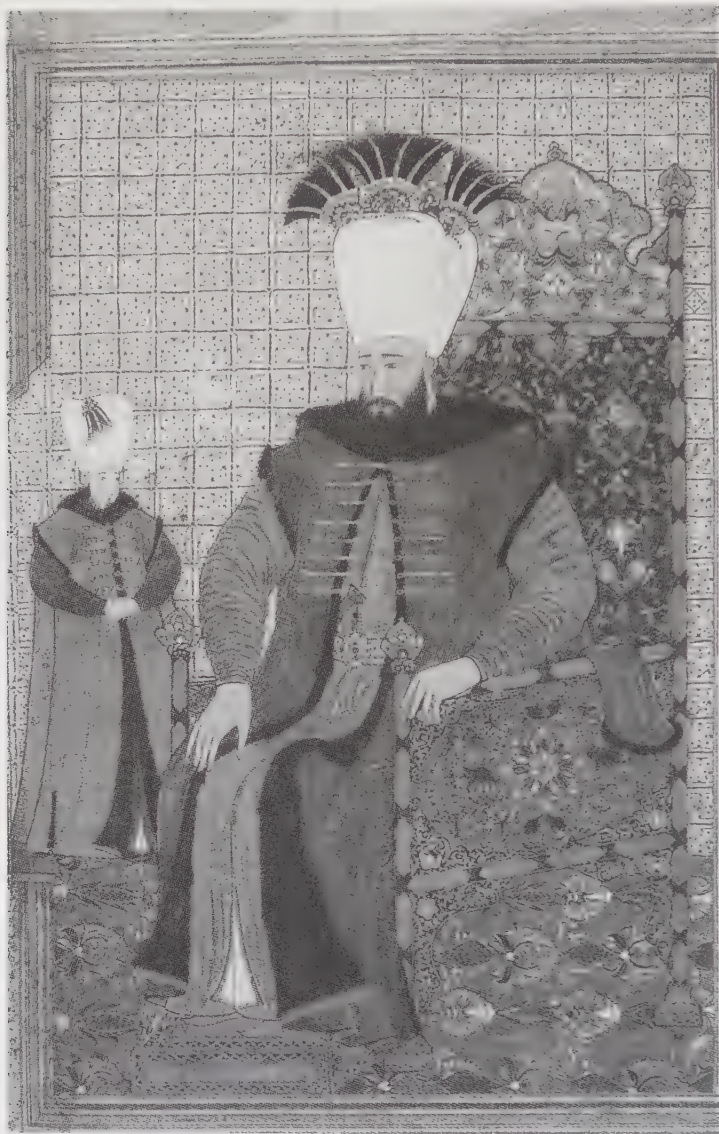


Figure 2: Ahmed III

THE TULIP ERA

THE REFORMS OF İBRAHİM PASHA

Enver Ziya Karal, a Turkish historian well-known for his study of the Ottoman Empire, has written of this period, "After the Passarowitz Treaty, there was a radical change in the mentality of Ottoman statesmen... They opted for the pleasures of this world as opposed to those of the afterlife."¹ This observation is indeed accurate, but it does not provide an explanation as to why change occurred so suddenly, how it arose and what effect it had on the trajectory of the Ottoman Empire. To change such a well-established mindset, specific conditions must exist, each of which has repercussions. Therefore, to adequately explain the change Karal noted, one must look back 50–60 years, or even a century, and study the conditions that then existed and diagnose which ones gave rise to the new mindset.

During its zenith, the Ottoman Empire's western boundary extended to the gates of Vienna. However, two attempts to capture the city (the first in 1529 and the second in 1683) and a century and a half long siege failed to expand this border westward. Many argued that this failure was due to the alliance between the Hapsburgs and King John III Sobieski of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the latter's leadership of Polish, Austrian and German forces at the 1683 Battle of Vienne. However, defeat by foreign forces in Central Europe was not the only problem. The Janissaries on more than one occasion were also incapable of quelling revolts within the Empire itself and doubts were raised had had been early on by statesmen and writers, such as Naima and Koçi

¹ See Enver Ziya Karal, "Ahmed III," *Encyclopedia of Islam*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1993. Vol. 1, p. 1686.

Bey, about the capabilities of the Janissary army and about the functioning of the Ottoman state itself. Understanding how the Europeans and their armies had captured the upper hand from the Ottomans became an urgent priority for those Ottoman officials seeking to maintain the Empire's place in the world. However, for centuries the Ottomans had lived in near complete isolation, lacking awareness of developments beyond the Empire's frontiers as even well-educated Ottomans paid little mind to Europe. Years of conquest in the Balkans and Central Europe created an unshakable belief in the superiority of Ottoman ways, yet it became evident that the nation states of Europe had developed tremendous power. During and after the Renaissance and the Reformation, they were able to build armies with more efficient weaponry than ever known before and gold and silver discoveries in New World colonies provided international trade advantages and strengthened their economies greatly.²

It was early in the eighteenth century that one Ottoman statesman finally realized the urgent need for radical reforms lest the coming years turned out to be calamitous for the Empire. That statesman was the Grand Vizier İbrahim Pasha of Nevşehir, the signatory to the Treaty of Passarowitz. He was born in a small Anatolian town on an unknown date circa 1622. He studied briefly in the neighborhood school and at the age of seventeen left for Istanbul, where he was employed as a cook in the palace kitchen. He was of extraordinary intelligence and strove to improve himself, moving up the palace organization. On one auspicious occasion, he met Crown Prince Ahmed, who was impressed by his intelligence, articulation and knowledge. The prince never forgot the young man from Nevşehir, and soon after ascending to the throne in 1703 as Ahmed III, appointed him to a high position in the palace. In 1715, İbrahim participated in the Battle of Morea as a high level clerk and the following year was named the director of finances of the province of Niş. The latter position gave him invaluable experience in the financial affairs of the province and revealed the defi-

² Stanford J. Shaw, *Between Old and New: The Ottoman Empire under Sultan Selim III, 1789–1807*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971. pp. 4–5.

ciencies of the financial administration of the Empire, which were in a pitiful state. When, as Grand Vizier, İbrahim returned to Istanbul from signing the Treaty of Passarowitz, Sultan Ahmed III received him with great pomp and ceremony and showered him with gifts.

Ahmed III was a handsome young man, raised with a good education in the palace. Like many of his forefathers, he was a poet and an accomplished calligrapher. He, too, was convinced that various reforms were needed in the Empire, though it is unknown whether in fact he read any of the counsels himself. However, between his accession to the throne in 1703 and 1717 he appointed seventeen Grand Viziers. He had been unable to find a Grand Vizier capable of implementing the reforms he believed the Empire required, but believing he had found the right man and impressed as he was with the intelligence, abilities and knowledge of İbrahim, the Sultan bestowed upon him the rank of pasha, married him to his daughter and appointed him Grand Vizier in 1717 and chief negotiator of the Treaty of Passarowitz in 1718.

Based on merit, the Ottoman administration saw İbrahim move from being a cook in the palace to the second highest post in the Ottoman hierarchy. This trajectory suggests he was a brilliant strategist and a great tactician within the palace bureaucracy, but he must have known that the Sultan had dismissed several Grand Viziers before him. It must also have been evident to İbrahim Pasha that the reforms he had in mind required that his tenure as Grand Vizier be stable and continue for several years. He needed time, a secure position and, most of all, the total trust of Sultan Ahmed III. In yet another reflection of his competency and the trust the Sultan had in him, İbrahim Pasha remained the Grand Vizier for twelve consecutive years and reinforced the Sultan's opinion that the Empire's military, financial and administrative systems needed reform. He also convinced the Sultan that it was absolutely necessary to learn from European technological progress if the Empire was to survive.

İbrahim started his reforms cautiously and began with efforts to increase state revenues and reduce expenditures, as well as minor structural reforms in the judiciary. Regretfully, because diaries, journals and the archiving of official correspondences were not Ottoman traditions, there is little in the way of a historical record to enlighten us as to his assessment of the reforms, or how he

planned and executed them. However, judging from the measures he took and the policies he implemented, it is not difficult to surmise that he understood Europe was militarily superior to the Ottoman Empire. Until the defeats that ended with the Karlowitz and Passarowitz treaties, Ottoman statesmen continuously deluded themselves by believing the Empire was the world's superior power. They never saw the need for permanent embassies in the major European capitals, such as Paris and London, while the European powers had maintained embassies in Istanbul since the early sixteenth century. From time to time, the Empire sent emissaries to European capitals for visits of short duration, usually in order to attend coronations or sign treaties, and when they returned to Istanbul, they simply informed the Grand Vizier verbally of what they observed as written reports were deemed unnecessary. Not until 1721 was the first comprehensive embassy report prepared by an Ottoman official. It was written by Mehmed Çelebi after a full year of residence in Paris at the request of the Grand Vizier İbrahim Pasha.

The choice of France was, first and foremost, a political maneuver. Neither Austria nor Russia was willing to share openly the reasons for their military superiority as well as their technological innovations and advances with an Ottoman ambassador. Whereas these countries had a common border with the Empire and had engaged it in several wars, there was no such animosity with France. Moreover, the French ambassador in Istanbul, Marquis de Bonnac, was rather friendly with the Grand Vizier and they likely discussed the possibility of sending an ambassador to France. Bonnac's boasting of French civilization also likely played a role in convincing the Grand Vizier that whatever could be learned from the West, and whatever technology could be transferred to the Ottoman Empire, would be a boost to the reforms he was contemplating. On September 9, 1719, İbrahim Pasha officially approached Bonnac and expressed the Ottoman Empire's interest in sending an ambassador to France. Bonnac may have thought that this was merely a suggestion as he did not immediately inform Paris of the Empire's intention. In subsequent meetings, however, İbrahim Pasha insisted on the seriousness of the request and claimed a friendship treaty between France and the Ottoman Empire would be beneficial to both states, as Austria was a danger to France as well. He also may have argued that such a treaty would

marginalize Venice, giving France a freer hand in the western Mediterranean. Bonnac finally contacted Paris and received a positive answer. He and the Grand Vizier then discussed the choice of the most appropriate ambassador and they agreed on Yirmi Sekiz Mehmed Çelebi.

Mehmed Çelebi had received a good, well-rounded education and originally rose through the Janissary corps. He served in a number of provinces as the director of finances and was deputy chief negotiator during the Passarowitz Treaty negotiations. Before leaving Istanbul for Paris on September 7, 1720, he received very specific instructions from the Grand Vizier: observe all the manifestations of French civilization by visiting military fortifications and academies, factories, printing presses, hospitals and schools in order to understand how France armed itself, trained its soldiers and officers, educated its citizens and manufactured its goods. He was received in Paris with great pomp and presented precious gifts from Sultan Ahmed III to Louis XV. The king reciprocated with similar gifts and even the architectural plan of his palace.

During his twelve month residence in Paris, Mehmed Çelebi fulfilled his duties with great attention to detail and went far beyond them. He visited the French King's library, accumulated knowledge on art and architecture, travelled via the country's rivers on his way from Marseilles to Paris and observed commercial traffic and the operation of locks. He observed and studied the development of sewer systems and city planning generally. Mehmed Çelebi reported in great detail to the Grand Vizier upon his return to Istanbul all that he had observed and studied.³ However, the

³ See *Paradis des Infidèles/Relation de 28 Tchelebi Mehmed Efendi, Ambassadeur Ottoman en France sous la Régence* (translated from Turkish by Julien-Claude Gallande) Paris, 1981; Şevket Rado, *Voyage to France of the First Ottoman Ambassador Yirmi Sekiz Mehmed Çelebi (Yirmi Sekiz Mehmed Çelebi'nin Fransa Seyahatnamesi)*. Istanbul: Tarih Mecmuası Yayınları, 1970; Murat Aykaç Erginöz, *Memoirs of 28 Mehmed Çelebi, the First Ambassador to France (İlk Osmanlı Sefiri 28 Mehmed Çelebi'nin Fransa Anıları)*. Istanbul: Özgü Yayınları, 2002; and Bernard Lewis, *The Moslem Discovery of Europe*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1982, p. 115.

printing press that he brought back with him was what most impressed the Grand Vizier.

Although printing presses had existed in Istanbul and a few other cities in the Empire since they were first brought to Ottoman lands in 1492 by the Jews expelled from Spain, the Sultan of the time, Beyazid II, forbade them to print books in Turkish or Arabic. Books in Turkish were published only in handwritten form in small numbers by madrasa-educated scribes, which limited their availability. Naturally, those who earned their living copying books by hand were opposed to the broader use of the printing press since it would curtail their earnings. Indeed, the Empire's *ulema* considered publishing books through the printing press a violation of sharia. Still, the dearth of books, especially scientific ones, was a great concern of the Grand Vizier and he strove to expand the use of the printing press. To this end, İbrahim Pasha used his influence with the Sultan, who issued an imperial edict allowing the establishment of an official press. With the blessing of the Grand Vizier, Said Efendi, the son of Ambassador Çelebi Mehmed, who accompanied his father to Paris and observed and admired the printing presses there, collaborated with a Hungarian refugee called İbrahim Müteferrika to set up a printing press.⁴ To preempt any objection on religious grounds, the Grand Vizier also convinced the Sheikhulislâm⁵ to issue a fatwa publicly declaring the printing press compatible with sharia law. The fatwa was further fortified with a document that carried the signatures of the Sharif of Mecca, all the judges of Istanbul and of the Chief Judges of Anatolia and Rume-

⁴ İbrahim Müteferrika was born in Hungary in 1674. His real name is unknown, but at the age of eighteen he was taken prisoner by Ottoman forces during a battle. After years in Istanbul, he converted to Islam, entered into the Ottoman civil service and advanced rapidly, becoming the ambassador to Vienna. See Franz Babinger, *Müteferrika and the Ottoman Printing Press (Müteferrika ve Osmanlı Matbaası)*. Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı, 2004.

⁵ The Sheikhulislâm was the Ottoman official in charge of all religious matters and canon law, who, in the Ottoman civil service hierarchy, was nearly equivalent to the Grand Vizier in importance.

lia. This document ruled the establishment of a printing press was neither against the precepts of Islam nor against sharia.⁶

By establishing the printing press İbrahim Pasha sought to accomplish two goals: to increase the general population's level of education and to reduce the monopoly over knowledge enjoyed by the *ulema*. The publications in Turkish would reduce the shortage of books (especially those dealing with science) available to the public by making them more affordable and accessible. This would in turn address the illiteracy and ignorance that prevailed amongst the Ottoman citizenry. Additionally, publishing through printing presses would help address the competing centers of power in the Ottoman system, most notably the religious authorities. The *ulema* had, in the past, meddled with the civil administration and allied themselves with the Janissaries to prevent change and progress in the Empire. To achieve these goals, the works of outstanding Ottoman writers were first printed, with the writings of Naima and Kâtip Çelebi among them. Then, important books in foreign languages, primarily Arabic and Persian, were translated and printed in Turkish. Grammar books in Latin and French, maps, and works of Aristotle and Descartes were also translated and printed, as was a book teaching Turkish to Frenchmen.⁷ Books previously too expensive became available at the more modest price of 35 piasters. Whether or not İbrahim Pasha read the works of Naima and Kâtip Çelebi, he believed strongly a host of reforms were urgently needed to ensure the continued existence of the Empire, and the proliferation of literacy through the printing press was among them.

Though a laudable reform attempt, the introduction of printing to the Ottoman Empire came approximately three hundred years after Gutenberg's first printing in Europe, doing little to address the gap in knowledge between the West and the Empire. Fur-

⁶ For the complete text of these see Uzunçarşılı, *op. cit.*, Part 1, pp. 160–161, and Part 2, p. 514.

⁷ For the list of the books see Hidayet Nuhoglu, "Some Comments on the Printing press of Müteferrika," ("Müteferrika Matbaası ve bazı Mülâhazalar,") Mustafa Armağan, ed., *The Tulip Era (Lâle Devri)*. Istanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi Kültür İşleri Başkanlığı, No. 85, 2000, pp. 221–223; and Babinger, *op. cit.*

thermore, the books published after the introduction of printing presses in Istanbul and other Ottoman cities were far from adequate in reducing popular ignorance. Indeed, the venture lasted a short time for the Janissary revolt ended the experiment in printing in 1730 and new printing did not revive until the end of the century.

Bringing printing to the Ottoman Empire was not İbrahim Pasha's only attempted reform. Other less lofty efforts included improvements to city planning and administration. For instance, as a city of frail wooden buildings Istanbul was subject to frequent fires that wiped out entire neighborhoods, in part because there was no organization dedicated to fighting them. Water for firefighting was provided by infrequent municipal water pumps and even fountains. During such fires, people prayed for rain in the absence of an organized firefighting outfit. Transporting and relocating the victims of fires, as well as overcrowding caused by Balkan and Central European refugees flocking to Istanbul exacerbated the problem and made even more urgent the need for a professional fire brigade. To accomplish this, İbrahim Pasha turned to a Frenchman named Louis David, who was residing in Istanbul and had converted to Islam, taking the name Davud Ağa, and had some experience in firefighting. In this reform effort that more or less succeeded, the Grand Vizier ordered Davud to set up a firefighting organization and also addressed the city's water shortages. No efforts were spared to repair the aqueducts. More were built and additional fountains, each one an architectural gem, were constructed throughout Istanbul, thereby providing potable water to the public and a more reliable resource for firefighters.

It is said that upon entering Constantinople, Sultan Mehmed II stated, "True art is to create a glorious city and to fill the people's hearts with felicity." It isn't known if İbrahim Pasha was inspired by this statement but he certainly undertook the beautification of Istanbul with extreme seriousness.⁸ A beautiful imperial

⁸ Nedim, a renowned poet of the time and a companion of Sultan Ahmed III and Grand Vizier İbrahim Pasha, eulogized Istanbul in a poem beginning thus:

Oh Istanbul, you have no equal and no price,

palace called Sadabat ("eternal happiness") was built on the Golden Horn and was based on the blueprints of Versailles brought from Paris by Mehmed Çelebi. Its environs were turned into a public park and other new parks began to dot Istanbul for the people's enjoyment. Additional palaces followed Sadabad on the shores of the Bosphorus and of the Golden Horn. The new palaces and parks not only made Istanbul more beautiful, but they provided ample work opportunities through their construction. Flowers, especially tulips,⁹ began to adorn palaces, parks, mansions and even the windowsills of average houses and a relaxed air permeated the Empire, especially Istanbul. The era of Ahmed III brought a breath of fresh air to Ottomans weary of the unending wars of his predecessors.¹⁰ It was in this relatively peaceful atmosphere that İbrahim Pasha executed his reforms.

Of course, this era was not a Roman *panem et circenses*. The serious business of reform was attended to. Nevertheless, İbrahim Pasha kept Sultan Ahmed III occupied with worldly pleasures, in-

For a single stone of yours all Persia can be sacrificed

Known for his beautiful yet hyperbolic poetry, Nedim was not belittling Persia but exalting Istanbul.

⁹ The tulip had been a favorite flower of the Sultans long before Ahmed III. It also carried a quasi-mystical quality since the Turkish word for tulip (*lâle*) and Allah contain the same letters in the Arabic script.

¹⁰ In another poem Nedim expressed the prevailing state of mind in this way:

*Let us give a little pleasure to this heart that's wearied so
Let us go to Sa'adabad my swaying cypress, let us go!
A swift caique is ready at the pier below,
Let us go to Sa'adabad, my swaying cypress, let us go!*

*Get permission from your mother for Friday prayers.
Let us steal a day from destiny and all its cares
Through secluded back streets till we reach the harbor stairs
Let us go to Sa'adabad, my swaying cypress, let us go!*

*Let us laugh, let us play and take pleasure from life
Let us drink the waters that from Heaven spout
Let us admire life's waters as they flow from dragon's mouth
Let us go to Sa'adabad, my swaying cypress, let us go!*

tellectual discourses and conversations with the poets and men of science of the time while he became the *de facto* 'principal.' Within thirteen years, İbrahim Pasha succeeded to a great extent in many of his attempted reforms, balancing the Empire's budget and establishing civil organizations, such as a fire brigade, that Istanbul needed most. He succeeded in building schools, libraries and printing presses. Due to these efforts water was made available to more citizens and jobs were plentiful. Despite this string of achievements, İbrahim Pasha did not realize one of his chief reforms: the transformation of the military and its role in Ottoman society and polity. He was not able to eliminate the interference of the Janissaries who meddled in the affairs of the state and dared to assassinate sultans.

As İbrahim Pasha sought to carry out his reform of the military, whispers among the Janissaries grew as suspicions of an impending slaughter steadily developed. These words were fortified by the similar feelings of betrayal of disgruntled mullahs who had lost their income and livelihoods as scribes due to the Gran Vizier's printing press reforms. When they delivered their Friday sermons, the mullahs defamed İbrahim Pasha and claimed he had not truly converted to Islam and was, in fact, an infidel Christian who "hid a tiny crucifix in his armpit". A new mullah-Janissary coalition developed and calls for İbrahim Pasha's death increased. Finally, on September 28, 1730, in an entrance to the covered bazaar a handful of Janissaries, their swords aloft, began to shout and called the people of the Empire to arms. With cries of, "Oh, people of Mohammed, we have a serious grievance. We are losing our *sharia*. Come and join us," a revolt was afoot. It was led by a Janissary named Patrona Halil and by nightfall his handful of rebellious Janissaries had become an unruly crowd.

At the time, Sultan Ahmed III and the Grand Vizier were in Üsküdar, on the Asian side of Istanbul, preparing an expedition against the Iranian Shah whose army, a year previously, had captured the Ottoman city of Tabriz. İbrahim Pasha appeared to be preparing for war, but had in fact intentionally delayed it because he knew the war was going to end with major Ottoman losses. The available Janissaries were ignorant of the art of war and the defeat of the Ottoman army seemed an assured outcome. Neither the Grand Vizier nor the Sultan took the uprising of the Janissaries on the European side of the city seriously and they continued deliber-

ating over war with Persia. However, the uprising grew and realizing the danger, the palace moved from Üsküdar to Topkapı. This did little to quell the revolt and Sultan Ahmed III was deposed and İbrahim Pasha was brutally lynched by the Janissaries. The reign of Ahmed III, and with it the Tulip Era, came to an end. A brief opening toward Europe was firmly shut for years to come.

RENAISSANCE OR DEBAUCHERY?

Until the early twentieth century all historians, including the great Joseph von Hammer,¹¹ referred to the Tulip Era as simply the reign of Ahmed III. It was not until 1908 that a new name was coined when renowned poet Yahya Kemal (1894–1958) and popular historian Ahmed Refik (1884–1937), while discussing the reign of Ahmed III, agreed to use “Tulip Era” to describe the period. The same year, Refik wrote and published a series of articles in which he narrated the various aspects of the era and the designation “Tulip Era” stuck.

Historians who came after the Tulip Era recorded the period as one of debauchery, fornication and shame.¹² Whether they wrote such lies in order to ingratiate themselves with the Sultans that succeeded Sultan Ahmed III or with Patrona Halil, the ringleader of the revolting Janissaries, is a moot point because this denigration continues to the present day in Turkey and has even found its way into high school textbooks. Foreign writers have judged the period and İbrahim Pasha in exactly the opposite way. Daniel de Fonseca, a Portuguese citizen who resided in Istanbul from 1702 till 1790, wrote: “İbrahim Pasha was not only a good palace officer and an

¹¹ See Joseph von Hammer Purgstall, *Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches (Büyük Osmanlı Tarihi)*. Vol. 10, Istanbul: Üç Dal Neşriyat, 1991.

¹² See for example *History of Destarı Salih (Destarı Salih Tarihi)*. Bekir Sıtkı Baykal, ed. Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1962. A history written during the reign of Sultan Mahmud I who succeeded Ahmed III; Ali Kemal Meram, *Mothers of the Sultans and the Devshirmes who Ruled us for 600 Years (Padişah Anaları ve Biz 600 Yıl Yöneten Devşirmeler)*. Istanbul: Toplumsal Dönüşüm Yayınları, 1997, pp. 465–6. See also a high school textbook endorsed by the Ministry of Education, Kemal Kara, *History of the Ottoman Empire (Osmanlı Tarihi)*. Istanbul, 2003, pp. 125–137.

intelligent politician, but he was also an honest person.” The Venetian *bailo* (a diplomatic post overseeing Venetian affairs in the Empire) referred to İbrahim Pasha in the reports he sent to the Doge from Istanbul as a particularly prudent statesman. Finally, Stanford Shaw described him as a great statesman and a great politician.¹³

The Tulip Era was the only period of renaissance in the Ottoman Empire and its architect was Grand Vizier İbrahim Pasha. As with the European renaissance, it was born in a peaceful environment and just as his European counterparts did, Sultan Ahmed III and his son-in-law, the Grand Vizier, financed artists and writers and generated a brief blossoming of Ottoman art forms. For the first time, the Ottoman state protected and compensated poets like Nedim, Sâdi Çelebi, Sami, Osmanzade Taib, musicians like Enfi Hasan Ağa, Tamburî Mustafa Çavuş, who introduced sensual love into the lyrics of their songs, miniaturists like Levnî, who revolutionized the art of miniature, and master architects, who transformed classical Ottoman architecture and brought new ornamentation never seen before. The regeneration of Ottoman art, together with the realized superiority of western military and technological innovations, which the Ottomans had looked down upon, make it difficult to label the Tulip Era anything other than a renaissance.¹⁴ The period reflected a change in the mentality of Ottoman administrators and leaders.

¹³ See Shaw *History, op.cit.*, pp. 233–243.

¹⁴ For literature, music, architecture and miniature work see Fuat Andıç and Süphan Andıç, *Window to the West: The Tulip Era (Batiya Açılan Pencere: Lâle Devri)*. Istanbul: EREN Yayıncılık, 2006, p. 54.

1730–1789: MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

More than half a century elapsed between the Janissary revolt that ended the Tulip Era and the ascension of Selim III, and four sultans held only tenuous power in that time: Mahmud I (1730–1754), Osman III (1754–1757), Mustafa III (1757–1774) and Abdülhamid I (1774–1789). These were years of missed opportunities as any chance for reform was lost in sporadic Janissary revolts and wars with Russia, the Persian Empire, the Republic of Venice and Austria. Even if the four sultans who ruled this period had actually intended to lead reform efforts, they weren't provided with the peace and stability the reform-minded İbrahim Pasha believed was necessary to do so successfully.

Of the four, Sultan Mahmud reigned the longest. The early years of his twenty-four year reign were occupied with political maneuvering to eliminate the influence and power of Patrona Halil, who led the revolt that deposed Sultan Ahmed III and İbrahim Pasha and had become a virtual dictator. The effort ended with purges and executions. From 1733 to 1735 the Empire fought wars with Persia over the latter's occupation of Tabriz and Baghdad. Wars on the northern and western frontiers of the Empire, with Russia and the Austro-Hungarian Empire, respectively, flared from 1736 to 1739 and in 1743 war with Persia resumed, ending in a stalemate. A fragile peace wasn't established until the end of Sultan Mahmud's reign and the final years of his reign were beset by persistent health problems. Despite near constant war and internal revolts, he succeeded in reopening the printing presses and financed the construction of an exquisite, monumental fountain in Tophane.

Mahmud's successor, Sultan Osman III, reigned for a mere three years. He was fifty-six years old and a virtual prisoner of the Harem. His short life span, brief reign and limited mental capacity

were combined to prevent any serious contribution to Ottoman reform or civilization.

At forty years of age, Mustafa III succeeded Sultan Osman III and reigned for sixteen years. Though he was conscious of the Ottoman Empire's disastrous trajectory (he appointed the wise and honest statesman Koca Ragıp Pasha as Grand Vizier) and was mindful of needed reform, fear of a potential Janissary revolt prevented any attempt at serious changes to the status quo in the Empire at the time. In one of his poems Sultan Mustafa III wrote that the state of affairs was so rotten that the administration had fallen into the hands of scoundrels.

Yet another Russo-Turkish war occurred during his reign. It began in 1768, lasted six years, and ended in disaster for the Ottomans. Since the time of Tsar Peter the Great, the Russians had coveted the Crimea and access to the Black Sea, and in this conflict they essentially gained both. The Janissaries lost nearly every engagement with the Russian army and the Russian Baltic fleet sailed from Riga to Çeşme (the Ottoman naval base on the Aegean Sea) and totally obliterated the Ottoman navy. The Ottoman Empire surrendered its military superiority on both the Black and Mediterranean Seas. The war ended with the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca on July 21, 1774, and the conditions were onerous for the Ottomans. The Crimea and its environs ceased to be an Ottoman vassal state and became independent (though the Russians quickly gained influence there and eventually annexed the region, ending its brief independence). This was an extremely serious blow to the Ottoman Empire because the Crimea was the first Muslim territory it had lost in war. Additionally, Russia was given most favored nation status and freedom of navigation on the Black and Mediterranean Seas, as well as on all Ottoman rivers. Russia gained the right to establish consulates in any Ottoman city of its choice and it became the *de facto* protector of the Orthodox Greeks, which allowed the Russians to meddle in the Ottoman Empire's internal affairs. Giving the Russians a direct say in internal Ottoman governance, the treaty also declared that the Ottoman government could only appoint the governors of Moldova and Wallachia after consultation

with St. Petersburg. Finally, the Ottoman state was required to pay 4.5 million rubles as reparations of war.¹

Abdülhamid I was forty-nine years old when he succeeded Mustafa III and became sultan in 1774. The Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca was signed in the seventh month of his accession and Ottoman humiliations and concessions continued for the rest of his reign. In 1776 Iran captured Basra. In 1783 Russia formally incorporated the Crimea into its borders and in 1787 another Russo-Ottoman war began. This was followed by a war with Austria in 1788. Such was the reign of Abdülhamid I, occupied with conflicts and a torrent of defeats and territorial surrenders that the Sultan had no opportunity to consider, let alone implement, serious reforms. There is evidence that he at least thought of such things, as he is reported to have discussed a dream with his nephew Selim to open a channel between the Red Sea and the Mediterranean. He spoke of the riches that would thereby accrue to the Empire. However, such a project remained a dream.

In April 1789 Sultan Abdülhamid I died from a stroke. The Chief Eunuch İdris Ağa accompanied Selim to his uncle's bedroom and pronounced:

“My Sultan, your uncle has surrendered his soul to his maker. None of us live forever in this world. It is now your turn to take the throne. May God's grace be upon his soul and may God's protection be upon you.”

¹ For details, see Johann Wilhelm Zinkeisen, *Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches in Europa*. Gotha, 1857 (*Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Tarihi*). Istanbul: Yeditepe, 2011, Vol. 5, pp. 642–673.



Figure 3: Selim III

SELİM III

Expectations were high for the young Sultan Selim III when he succeeded Abdülhamid I. Both the Ottoman elites and the general populace hoped for an end to the wars that had whittled away the Empire's borders and they yearned for a period of stability and peace in which they could enjoy life. Selim seemed to anticipate these expectations as he expressed in a poem his preparedness to serve the people when he ascended to the throne.

*Lâzık olursa cihanda bana taht-ı devlet
Eylemek mahz-ı safadır bana nâse hizmet*

(If one day I were to deserve to ascend the throne,
My distinct pleasure will be to serve the public)

On May 14, 1789, only about a month after his accession, Sultan Selim III called for a meeting of a Consultative Council (*Meclis-i Meşveret*). A council of this nature was something entirely new in Ottoman administration. Up to this point, sultans had expressed their thoughts and wishes to their Grand Viziers, who discussed the matter with the other viziers in the Imperial Council (*Divanı Hümayun*) and transmitted decisions taken to the Sultans. In turn, the Sultans either accepted or rejected the decisions. Sultan Selim III changed this type of administrative procedure entirely. He personally attended the meetings of the Imperial Council and instituted the much broader Consultative Council.

Two hundred people were invited to the meeting of the Consultative Council. They constituted a broad cross-section of Ottoman elites and included viziers, religious notables, provincial officials, judges and high ranking Janissary officers. The agenda was wide ranging and took in discussions of domestic and foreign affairs, as well as the problems in each sphere that continued to pes-
ter the Empire and impede its development. Sultan Selim III spoke first and began with a lengthy list of the problems retarding internal

affairs and administration. He indicted the provincial governors for ignoring orders from Istanbul and behaving as petty dictators. Members of the imperial court, religious officials and judges were accused of rampant corruption and bribery that tied justice to wealth and saw state properties auctioned off to the highest bidder. The Janissary order and military were not spared, as Selim III pointed out that those registered as Janissaries were always present on payday, but disappeared when called to war. He decried the navy as a disaster in which good order and discipline had been replaced with the debauchery of ill-trained and disorderly recruits. The Sultan finished his address and, after pausing for a moment, posed the question, "What would my notables say about these?" No one dared open his mouth as many of the participants were, in fact, the very same wrongdoers the Sultan had identified.

After a long silence the Sultan addressed the minister of foreign affairs (*reis-ül küttab*) and asked his opinion. The minister, his own list of the ills plaguing the Empire, stated:

"Those pashas who ignore his Imperial Majesty's orders must be punished and fired and we must strive to eliminate bribes, lest there be no hope for an honest justice system. Our financial difficulties are grave as tax revenues are stolen in the provinces before they can make it to the treasury's coffers. Prices are rising and the state, rightly, gets the blame."

None of the other participants intervened and they remained silent as he continued:

"Our army, considering the state it is in, can no longer be considered a military power. All the wars with the infidels have ended with our defeat. Our navy, too, is ineffective as evidenced by the enemy ships sailing in our coastal waters. Forgive me, Your Imperial Majesty, but our state is sinking."

The Sultan turned to the Chief Judge of Rumelia and asked his opinion.

"Your Imperial Majesty," began the Chief Judge, "our citizens are burdened with endless troubles. Our laws do not treat the rich and the poor equally. Taxes are too high for the peasants and are often illegal. The tax collectors are a merciless, shameless lot. Our army is ignorant of the art of war. None of these

problems are of your making. You have been on the throne for merely one month. You are not responsible for them, but the burden is on your shoulders and if you cannot come up with remedies then they will be your sin."

Several participants made short speeches agreeing with the opinion of the Chief Judge and the Sultan ended the meeting resolving,

"If we do not correct these errors, if we do not right all the wrongs, and most important of all, if we do not take such measures within the law and sharia, our Empire is doomed. We urgently need a new order."

The Sultan emphasized the term "new order" (*nizâm-ı cedid*) and the expression became the hallmark of his reign.¹

Selim III knew the Imperial Council would not be a productive force for reform as its members were in fact some of the worse culprits responsible for the ills from which the Ottoman Empire was suffering. He required advisers with no vested interest in the continuation of the status quo, so he formed a sort of shadow cabinet, an informal advisory council of reform-minded persons known to him.² These advisors agreed with the Sultan that there was much to be learned from the West that, if wisely applied, would contribute to and strengthen the Empire, which suggests they were familiar with what had transpired during the Tulip Era. Some of these new advisors were friends of Selim III and others had served in the Ottoman bureaucracy, but became disillusioned with its operation, but in any case the Sultan requested their opinions, which were likely to form the basis of the new order. There is, of course, no historical document to indicate whether or not this shadow cabinet read the previous, pro-reform counsels written so many years earlier. However, its recommendations were not dramatically different from those of Koçi Bey, or Naima, or Kâtip

¹ Two works are extraordinarily detailed in analyzing with minute detail the reign of Sultan Selim III. One is by Stanford Shaw, *Between . . . op. cit.* The other is by Karal, *op. cit.*, Vol. 5. The source for these historians is in fact *History of Cevdet (Cevdet Pasha Tarihi)*, *op. cit.*, Vol. 5, pp. 2239–2244.

² For the details of the advisory council see Shaw, *Between . . . op. cit.*, pp. 86–91.

Çelebi. Of course, detecting the shortcomings of the Ottoman Empire at the end of the eighteenth century was not very difficult and would have been obvious to such keen observers. The deficiencies of the Ottoman system were so intertwined with the machinery of the state that the recommended measures to deal with them and that would lead to substantial reform would be all the more difficult to carry out. Nevertheless, at the beginning of his reign, Sultan Selim III earnestly undertook to right the ship of state.

The reforms were carried out in three different sectors of the state: finances, the military and the foreign affairs. With the Empire on the brink of bankruptcy due to the substantial expenditures required by wars and internal unrest, drastic measures and reforms to address solvency were taken immediately after the Sultan's meeting with the Consultative Council. Confiscation was a key tool, but the targets were officials and notables who had enriched themselves through corruption and hoarding, and not the peasantry as in the past. Those who were holding gold and silver were required to surrender it to the treasury and compensated with copper money below the free market price. Gold and silver in the palace, whether in the form of elaborate candlesticks, plates, cups, bowls or other ornaments of wealth, was sent to the Imperial Mint and converted into coins. Such seizures of wealth upset vested interests, such as the clergy. Despite the ruling of the *Sheikhulislâm* that temporary confiscation was compatible with *sharia*, the *ulema* began a propaganda campaign against the Sultan. They had entrenched interests in perpetuating themselves as a class and his policies threatened their wealth. Their ranks were flooded with persons entirely ignorant of religious law or practices, who managed to purchase their positions. Admission to the *ulema* was payment of a hefty bribe, without concern for qualification, so positions such as religious teachers were filled with the unqualified. This attracted the attention of the reform-minded sultan and inspectors were sent to the provinces to confirm qualifications and a rigid system of examination was set up. Those who failed were expelled. Students in the religious schools who received government stipends and who stayed in the schools year after year only to continue to receive stipends were weeded out. These reforms made the class of mullahs invested in the status quo extremely unhappy. So, after the reforms began to take effect and the objections of the *ulema* went ignored,

rumors began to spread that the Sultan was a drunkard and the minted money was going to be wasted in the palace:

The Sultan feared the mullahs and their coalition with the Janissaries, so he abandoned efforts to reform the madrasahs. Instead, he turned his attention to the reform of the military and established a new corps, which he called the new order (*nizâm-ı cedid*), founded military ordinance factories, set up military schools (such as the Imperial Engineering and Artillery School), brought in foreign military instructors (mostly from France), commissioned the translation of books on military warfare and techniques and constructed a modern powder mill. As with the attempted reforms of the *ulema* class, whispers intensified as the Sultan pursued his goal of reforming the military: Selim was going to replace the Janissaries with a new army.

While the Janissary order remained intact, the seeds of the new army, cultivated with the help of French officers, began to take root. This was intended to be an army with a different uniform, subject to different methods of training and housed in a separate barracks. Although the new army was open to all Janissaries should they opt to volunteer, many of them saw the new army as one of "infidels" and they had nothing to do with it. The number of foreigners increased to around 600 and the new army soon showed its valor against Napoleon's forces. Napoleon had captured Egypt, but his navy was decimated by Admiral Nelson's fleet in the Battle of the Nile. Anxious to return to France, he opted to go through Ottoman territory and faced Sultan Selim's new army at Acre in 1799, where it performed valiantly. Despite its success, the new army created problems for the Sultan as the Janissary order continued to spread propaganda discrediting the new army. Rumors ran rife that the Janissaries were to be trained like the army of infidels. Desertions in the new force began and training had to start all over again with great additional expenditures. The Sultan had no other recourse but to impose new taxes and since the taxes were earmarked for the new army those who paid the taxes resented it. Thus, the Sultan faced opposition to his new army from two sides of society: the Janissaries resented the army because they were afraid it would replace them and the citizens resented it because they were called upon to pay more taxes to fund it.

More successful than his attempts to reform the military and the clergy were Sultan Selim III's changes to Ottoman naval power.

The Ottoman Empire was bounded by three seas: the Mediterranean, the Aegean and the Black. To be a great empire, it had to be a naval power as well. Yet the Ottoman navy was in a pitiful state. It was obliterated in the Aegean in 1770 by the Russian Baltic fleet, its sailors were poorly trained and its marines were essentially untrained. Naval officers were appointed through bribes and high ranking naval personnel had become experts in stealing the salaries of rank and file sailors and marines. Selim again engaged naval engineers from France to build a modern navy. Naval personnel were subjected to a very strict training program and a newly established Ministry of the Navy took charge of all naval affairs.

From a foreign affairs standpoint, the Ottomans needed an ally in Europe, so Selim III's court set out to find one. Britain was not a likely candidate since it was immersed in its own political problems created by the loss of its colonies in North America. France was riddled with problems from its revolutions and Russia was the Empire's perennial enemy. The only candidates for a possible alliance were Sweden and Prussia. The Ottomans opted for an alliance with Sweden because, as a result of wars with Russia, Sweden had lost considerable territory and wanted revenge. Prussia, on the other hand, was far away and had no outstanding grievance with Russia. After long negotiations, an agreement with Sweden was reached: Sweden would declare war on Russia, would not sign a peace treaty with Russia and, together with the Ottoman Empire, would do everything possible to regain territories lost to Russia. Sweden managed to extract 20,000 aspers to underwrite the war expenditures but, after only a few battles, signed a separate peace agreement with the Russians on February 2, 1790. This left the Ottoman Empire fighting alone against the Russians, the money paid to Sweden wasted and Selim III once again without an ally. The last hope was Prussia.

King Wilhelm Frederick III of Prussia had serious disputes with both Russia and Austria. The imperialist aims of Russia as it sought to expand its territory and influence were of serious concern to Prussia and threatened to upset the balance of power in Europe. For the King of Prussia, an alliance with the Ottoman Empire could alter the balance of power in his favor by providing a key ally on Russia's frontier. The alliance was very much in Prussia's favor as the Ottoman Empire surrendered completely the Crimea to the Russians and Bessarabia and Wallachia-Moldova to

Austria. Prussia would, however, use its influence to regain for the Ottoman Empire all other territories Russia and Austria had occupied. Moreover, the Ottoman Empire was to provide a collection of trade privileges to Prussia and would support its ally in annexing Pomerania, which was then Swedish territory. Even in its alliances, the Ottoman Empire was surrendering power and influence, putting it in an increasingly tenuous geo-strategic position.

Foreign wars with Austria, Russia and even one-time ally France (due to Napoleon's occupation of Egypt) and domestic uprisings throughout the Empire frustrated Selim III's quest for reform. Instability in the very administrative machinery of the state also aggravated his desire to transform the Empire and his weak personality complicated matters further still. At the beginning of his reign, Selim III was eager and insistent on reforms, but after frustration and defeat in nearly all his reform efforts, he finally opted to take refuge in the pleasures of his palace. The judgment of the historian Shaw is worth citing here in its entirety:

"The result was continuous political instability which prevented the reformers not only from making any serious attempt to solve the wider political, economic and social problems which accompanied and endangered their efforts, but also pushing their reform measures through to final success. During Selim's eighteen years on the throne there were nine Grand Viziers, ten SheikhuIslâms, seven grand admirals, eighteen chief treasurers, sixteen *reis ül-küttâb* and nine dragomans (*terciiman*), each with his own ideas and policies and even more important each with his own political ambitions. This was the greatest tragedy of Selim's reign, the political factions and their alignments constantly changing and adjusting."³

Under these conditions the Sultan, as principal, could not exert his will and senior officials, as his agents, could not pursue an efficient and honest long-term policy. In fact, in this scenario the agents were more powerful than the principal.

The end of Selim III's reign came rather quickly. As it had hastened the end of the Tulip Era, the Janissary-mullah alliance

³ Shaw, *Between ... op. cit.*, p. 368.

also played a role in ending the reign of Selim. Both were threatened by the changes Selim wanted to bring about so a pact was formed amongst them to ensure one another's support in a revolt against the Sultan. On May 25, 1807, a *nizâm-ı cedid* officer and his detail went to the fort at Rumeli Kavağı on the European side of the Bosphorus to pay the guards' wages. The officer also demanded the guards put on *nizâm-ı cedid* uniforms and accept training according to the rules and regulations of the *nizâm-ı cedid*. But a group of guards led by Kabakçı Mustafa lynched the officer and tore apart the uniforms. Kabakçı immediately sent a messenger to the Palace requesting the dissolution of *nizâm-ı cedid* and much to the dismay of those who favored the reform of military, the Sultan complied. Instead of quelling the uprising, the Sultan's decision encouraged it. Kabakçı walked from Rumeli Kavağı to the Palace gathering forces around him, including a large number of Janissaries and many imams and mullahs from the mosques. The people in the streets were encouraged and incited to support Kabakçı and join the insurgents. The group's demands grew. They were not satisfied only with the dissolution of *nizâm-ı cedid* but also demanded the punishment of a number of high ranking officials who in their mind had violated sharia. In order to save his throne Selim III quickly accepted their demands and surrendered a number of officials who were summarily lynched. On May 29 the uprising ended. Ataullah Efendi, the *Sheikhulislâm*, who betrayed the Sultan and cooperated with the Kabakçı uprising, signed a fatwa stating that the Sultan had ruled poorly and violated the principles of Islam. The revolt succeeded in dethroning Selim III in five days. He was imprisoned in the Harem and was replaced by his cousin, Sultan Mustafa IV. Under the new sultan, Kabakçı became a virtual dictator.

Selim III failed in his effort to reform the Ottoman Empire. Nonetheless, when viewed contextually within the historical trajectory of the Empire, it is evident that his attempted reforms led to other, similar efforts, such as those carried out by his cousin Sultan Mahmud II. He became aware of the need for change in Ottoman governance and believed such reform required the eradication of certain organizations and competing centers of power within the state. This was the legacy of Selim III. Indeed, he left another legacy, beyond the reforms; one of Ottoman-Turkish culture. Being a talented poet and great composer, as were many of his forefathers,

Selim III's compositions can still be found today in concerts and recitals.⁴

⁴ For the mastery of Selim in music see Fuat Andic, *Those were the Days: The Intrigues of Mullah-Janissary Coalition during the Reign of Selim III* (*Geçmiş Zaman Olur ki: III. Selim Devrinde Molla-Yeniçeri Fesatları*). Ankara: Kadim, 2011, pp. 119–124; and M. Fatih Salgar, *Selim III, His Life, His Art. His Works* (*III.Selim, Hayatı, Sanatı, Eserleri*). Istanbul: Ötüken, 2001.

1807–1808: JANISSARIES REVOLT

In his history of the Roman Empire, Tacitus writes, “Emperors can ascend the throne in cities other than Rome wherever centurions are encamped. They could easily elect a new emperor.” Although this situation could not arise in the Ottoman Empire as sultans ascended the throne only in the capital city, deposing and replacing a sultan was relatively easy to accomplish. Whenever the Janissaries exclaimed, “We don’t want!” (*İstemezük*), one sultan would be toppled and another enthroned. The rebel Janissary leader Kabakçı and his cohorts succeeded in just such an effort. They shouted *istemezük*, reflecting their displeasure with Sultan Selim III, and in May 29, 1807, forced opened the gates of Topkapı Palace, coerced his abdication, and installed his 28 year old cousin as Sultan Mustafa IV.

Atrocities and carnage lasted for days as rioters searched for anyone close to Sultan Selim III. One such person was Hacı İbrahim Efendi, who had advised the now-deposed sultan since the establishment of *nizam-ı cedid*. He tried to escape from the Janissaries and took refuge in the house of an ex-ambassador, disguised himself and fled to Beylerbeyi, a small village on the Anatolian coast of the Bosphorus. But the bandits were relentless. They succeeded in finding him, brought him back to Beyazıt Square near the Topkapı Palace, plucked the hair of his beard one by one, cut him into pieces and carried his severed head on a lance to *Et Meydanı*, where they had started the riot, and exhibited it together with the heads of other notables for days. Other horror stories were told in detail by the chronicler Ahmed Cevdet Pasha.¹

¹ Ahmed Cevdet, *History of Cevdet (Tarihi Cevdet)*. Istanbul: Üç Dal Neşriyat, 1994 (revised edition). Vol. 4, pp. 2090–2098.

Another brief era of change seemed to have ended, but provincial allies of Selim III remained committed to the former sultan and his failed reforms. One such ally was Alemdar Mustafa Pasha, the Governor of Rusçuk, who had an army of 15,000 under his command. He shared Selim's opinions and believed in his reforms. He united with some of Selim's former officials who had taken refuge in Rusçuk and escaped Kabakçı's reprisals. Together they organized a counter coup to march on Istanbul, force Sultan Mustafa IV to abdicate and put Selim III back on the throne. In July 1808, in the fourteenth month of Mustafa's reign, Alemdar and his forces appeared in front of the Topkapı Palace. Sultan Mustafa IV, knowing what fate awaited him, ordered the assassination of Selim and his own brother Mahmud as their deaths would make him the sole male survivor of the dynasty and the rightful heir to the throne.

While Alemdar's soldiers were forcing open the gates of the Topkapı Palace, five assassins entered Selim's room, stabbed him to death and dragged his body, drenched in blood, through the second courtyard of the palace for Alemdar to see. The assassins then went to the private chambers of Mahmud, but before they could carry out their orders, Mahmud's servant grabbed a handful of warm ashes from the brazier in the center of the room and threw it into the eyes of the assassins, momentarily confusing them. With the provided delay, the servant helped Mahmud escape through a chimney.

When Alemdar entered the second courtyard he nearly stumbled over the dead body of his former sultan, and realized that Mustafa would have to kill Mahmud as well in order to ensure his right to the throne. He issued orders for Mahmud to be found. A short time thereafter, Mahmud entered the room of ceremonies, accompanied by Alemdar's faithful soldiers, and the ceremony of the oath of loyalty began. Sultan Mustafa was imprisoned in the Harem. The young Mahmud, saved by his servant and a handful of ashes, became the Sultan. He occupied the throne as Mahmud II for thirty years and undertook several reforms to secure the survival of the Empire.

MAHMUD II

Sultan Mahmud II took the throne on July 28, 1808. From the start of his reign, his primary objectives were the implementation of radical reforms and the replacement of certain institutions that, over the centuries, had broken down and become obstacles to progress in Ottoman society. His reign witnessed frequent wars, Janissary riots, provincial revolts (including the defeat of Ottoman forces in the interior of Anatolia by the army of the governor of Egypt) and uprisings by separatists in the Balkans demanding independence. Resolute to defend the integrity of Ottoman lands, and knowing full well the Empire would be condemned to ruin without drastic reform, Mahmud II's thirty-one year reign was a continuous struggle. But instead of taking short-term, quick measures, he set a long-term strategy of reform and adhered to it.¹

Born on July 20, 1785, he grew up during the reign of his cousin Selim III. Like all Ottoman princes, he had a classical education and studied Arabic and Persian. However, contrary to the tradition that left princes virtual prisoners in the Palace, Mahmud, as well as his older brother Mustafa, had considerable liberty and close camaraderie with the reigning sultan. That gave him the opportunity to observe Selim's reform efforts first hand, as well as their success and failure. He learned valuable lessons from Selim. Where the latter was mild mannered, Mahmud planned to be aggressive. Selim was indecisive, but Mahmud would be resolute. Selim in many cases left the administration of the Empire to his viziers, whereas Mahmud was determined to be the ultimate and absolute power. He set his own strategy and was an astute politi-

¹ See Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*. London: Oxford University Press, 1961. Pp. 75 – 101

cian and clever tactician. As conditions warranted, he altered his tactics but not his strategy.

The reign of Sultan Mahmud II may be examined in three components. One is the period from his ascension till the death of Alemdar Mustafa Pasha. The second is the years between Alemdar's death and the annihilation of the Janissary Order in 1826 by order of the Sultan. And the third incorporates the Sultan's reforms, as well as the wars and major political maneuvers, which occurred throughout his reign.

Mahmud appointed Alemdar Mustafa Pasha, who had placed him on the throne, as Grand Vizier. The private army that accompanied him from Rusçuk to Istanbul became the only power in the capital, where a reign of terror was in full swing. During the first five days of Mahmud's reign, three hundred men, who were directly involved in the ascension of Mustafa IV and the death of Selim III, were decapitated. The rebellious leaders of the Janissary Corps were either killed or exiled. These actions were sufficient to make Alemdar Mustafa Pasha the *de facto* dictator of Istanbul and, for a short while, it appeared that Mahmud II was sultan in name only. However, this situation was not conducive to what he was determined to accomplish, so Mahmud II worked to establish a power base for himself. The provincial notables rebelled against the palace from time to time and in addressing their grievances, Mahmud II sought to draw them to his side, ensure their loyalty to the throne and make them his power base.

On September 28, 1808, the Grand Vizier Alemdar Mustafa Pasha called for a meeting with such provincial personalities. In his opening speech he expounded on the problems and the difficulties that the Empire faced. The continuing difficulties caused by the Janissary Corps were most prominent as they had become useless as an army and unruly as an organization. After about two weeks of intense deliberations, a Document of Agreement (*Sened-i Ittifak*) was signed on October 7, 1808 by all those present. That document brought certain changes to the existing paradigm of Ottoman governance and its main articles can be summarized as follows:

- The notables would obey absolutely the orders of the Sultan and the Grand Vizier.
- If the orders of the Grand Vizier were against the established laws, the notables had the right to resist them.

- Taxes would be levied uniformly throughout the Empire and the taxes collected in the provinces would be sent to the Treasury in Istanbul. In turn, the Sultan promised that no taxes would be levied unjustly and unfairly.
- The notables promised to cooperate in the recruitment of soldiers in their provinces. Those who objected would be punished.
- The notables would rule justly in their territories and would act individually or collectively as guarantors for one another's fulfillment of their commitments as stated in the Document.
- In case of a Janissary uprising, the notables would march to Istanbul and cooperate with the Sultan to quell it.
- If any governor acted contrary to the Document, the notables would have the right to punish him. The post of the notable would be hereditary and guaranteed by all the others.
- The rule of the notables would be limited to their own provinces.
- If a notable were to act against *sharia*, other notables could punish him collectively.
- All tax-paying citizens would be protected. To maintain public order and prevent cruelty, the decisions taken by the notables and viziers would be applied uniformly.

The Document shows clearly that the notables would — up to a certain point — share power with the Sultan. This agreement went against the grain of absolute monarchy and appeared to involve a type of decentralization and devolution of certain powers from the center to the regions. This was a substantial change from the prevailing governing paradigm as Mahmud understood it and which he sought for his reign, and it was against his own understanding of the position and power of the Sultan. But it was bound to be a temporary stop-gap measure, for the Sultan had no other recourse. It was a tactical maneuver that guaranteed Mahmud the power base

he required to support the reforms he was contemplating for the future.²

One of the first undertakings of Grand Vizier Mustafa Pasha was to restore the new order (*nizâm-ı cedid*) army, though in a thinly disguised form. The Janissaries understood this and knew full well that under the new government their days were numbered. Whispers turned into loud shouts and on November 15, 1808, approximately a thousand of them surrounded the office of the Grand Vizier. It quickly became evident that Mustafa Pasha could not escape so he ended his life by igniting the gunpowder stored in the basement of the building. The explosion also killed several Janissaries who were in the building, unleashing the fury of their comrades. They plundered the residences of a number of viziers and began to discuss reinstating Mustafa as sultan. Some even suggested the termination of the Ottoman dynasty altogether, replacing the office with the ex-Khan of the Crimea.³ Another very dangerous Janissary revolt was in full swing. With a great deal of difficulty, the *Sheikbulislâm* convinced the rebellious military men that they had no right to terminate the dynasty since the Sultan was at the same time the Caliph. The Sultan accepted the Janissary demand to abolish the new military organization, which, in any case, was still in the early stages of establishment.

It has been much debated whether the Sultan could have saved the Grand Vizier, but the issue has remained unresolved. The truth is, people detested the governing conduct of Mustafa Pasha and his cohorts, and they were not happy with the comportment of his army, as they acted as spoiled conquerors. Although it was the Grand Vizier who provided for Mahmud II a road to the throne, his dictatorial behavior was an obstacle to the Sultan and his desire for absolute, centralized rule. With Alemdar Mustafa Pasha out of the picture, Mahmud became the absolute monarch and had his

² Some writers refer to the Document as the Ottoman *Magna Carta*. While the *Magna Carta* was the basis for several constitutional developments in Britain, the Document did not fulfill a similar role. See Stanford Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*. Cambridge University Press, 1977, Vol. 2, p. 3.

³ Karal, *op.cit.*, p. 100.

brother Mustafa murdered to become the sole survivor to the dynasty.

UNENDING WARS

The second phase in Sultan Mahmud II's reign was plagued with unending wars. The war that started with Russia during the last years of Sultan Selim III's reign came to a halt in a stalemate but it flared up again when Napoleon met with Tsar Alexander in Erfurt on October 12, 1808, and encouraged the Russians to occupy Wallachia and Moldova. The Ottoman Empire then broke its agreement with France that Selim III had signed. Britain, having already taken a position against Napoleon's France, offered the Ottoman Empire a treaty of friendship against France and Russia and the war resumed in 1809, ending with the Empire's defeat in 1812. During these three years, the Russian army exerted significant pressure on Ottoman forces and occupied Wallachia and Moldova, as well as Bessarabia and northern Bulgaria. But Tsar Alexander, being very suspicious of Napoleon's aims and expecting him to attack, regrouped his army, signed a peace treaty with the Ottoman Empire in Bucharest that returned Wallachia and Moldova to the Empire and made the River Prut the Russo-Ottoman border.

The war with Russia was not the only problem for Mahmud. Internal revolts remained a chronic problem in the Empire. Indeed, before the reign of Sultan Mahmud there were uprisings in Serbia, which started in February 1804 during the reign of Sultan Selim III, and continued on and off during the first years of Sultan Mahmud's reign. The Serbs, aided by the Russian Tsar, were fighting for a "Greater Serbia" that included Montenegro but the Russian desire to protect the Serbs was also a source for persistent antagonism between Austria and Russia. The Russians sought to protect their co-religionists in the Balkans, but a Serbia under the protection of Tsarist Russia was very much against Austria's imperialist aims in the Balkans, so it became a point of major friction between the three empires. To quell the Serbian revolt, the Ottoman army recaptured Belgrade in November 1813. The leader of the revolt, Karadjordjevic, took refuge in Austria, but the uprising ended with a number of concessions to the Serbs. Still, the defense of the key forts remained under the control of the Ottoman army.

Not long after the peace agreement in Serbia another revolt was in the making elsewhere in the Balkans. The Greeks living

within the Ottoman territories began to agitate for independence and a secret organization called *Ethnike Hetairia* formed in Thessaly and Mora to achieve it. To garner international backing for their nascent movement, the Greek rebels began to exploit the existing sympathy for ancient Greece in Europe, which was prevalent especially in Great Britain and France. As Orthodox Christians, they also leveraged their shared faith with the Russians to appeal for the sympathies of the Tsar and gain him as their great protector.

At the beginning of the hostilities the Ottoman army was alone in fighting with the rebellious Greeks. The European powers assumed positions of neutrality in order to appear to maintain the harmony among the powers established by the Austrian Foreign Minister Metternich. However, soon after the hostilities ended, Russia, under its interpretation of the articles of the Treaty of Kaynarca, requested formal assurances that no harm would come to the Christians. When the Ottoman government stated it could not give such assurances, Russia recalled its ambassador from Istanbul. On July 4, 1821, the Ottoman government formally requested clarification of British and Austrian positions. Though public opinion in these countries was very much in favor of the Greeks, they reaffirmed their official neutrality and urged the Russians to refrain from aiding the Greeks as such a move would be tantamount to recognizing an independent Greece. The Russians acceded, in part, because the Greeks were demanding full independence but the Tsar was desirous of a Greece under Russian influence and protection. Russia opted for yet another agreement with the Ottoman government, so a Congress was convened in Verona in October 1822. No agreement was reached to support the independence of Greece and the battle between Ottoman forces and the Greeks dragged on. Despite an ultimate Ottoman victory, the Janissaries once again showed they were no longer an effective fighting force.

The governor of Egypt, Mehmed Ali Pasha, had created a small, well-disciplined army and a navy to be reckoned with. Recognizing the inadequacies of the Janissary Corps as a fighting force, Sultan Mahmud II asked Mehmed Ali to assist the Ottoman forces in bringing the Greek revolt to a favorable end. As a *quid pro quo*, the governor of Egypt requested from the Sultan that he be appointed as governor of Crete, as well as of the Mora Peninsula. Though such an agreement permitted the Egyptian governor to

amass considerable power, Sultan Mahmud II had no other recourse but to accept Mehmed Ali's demand. His sizeable military and naval power brought the Greek revolution to its end in 1827. Russia, recognizing it had lost the opportunity to pursue her policies to reach the Mediterranean through a friendly Greece, declared war on the Ottoman Empire. Fearing a disruptive new alignment of power, Britain changed its political outlook: if Mehmed Ali were to remain governor of three provinces (Egypt, Crete and Mora) he could disturb the power balance in the Eastern Mediterranean and threaten British interests. In the British calculation, a weak Ottoman Empire was preferable to a strong Mehmed Ali or to greater Russian influence. The European powers met in London on July 6, 1827, and signed an agreement to make Greece an autonomous state within the Ottoman Empire. Its only tether to the Ottoman Empire would be merely the payment of taxes to the Ottoman state. The Empire rejected the agreement. In order to force the Empire and to dislodge the naval and land forces of Mehmed Ali, a combined naval force of British, French and Russian warships attacked the Ottoman-Egyptian navy at Navarin and sank the entire fleet on November 20, 1827. The Ottomans were now without an army or an effective naval fleet.

Seizing the opportunity and its rival's moment of weakness, Russia once again declared war on the Ottoman Empire in April 1828. Unsurprisingly, the Ottomans lost every battle, but internal strife in Russia forced the Tsar to end the war. On September 14, 1829 a peace treaty was signed in Edirne. The terms of the treaty were not favorable to the Ottoman Empire. Its major clauses included: the maintenance of the River Prut as the border between the two empires, the Russian acquisition of Poti and Ahsa in Eastern Anatolia, unfettered access to the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles by Russian commercial ships, the lifetime appointment of the governors of Wallachia and Moldova (who were also given special privileges) and the dismantling of all Ottoman forts in the latter two provinces. In addition, the Ottomans were required to pay Russia 11.5 million gold ducats as reparations.

As one war concluded, another flared on the opposite flank of the Ottoman Empire. On July 5, 1830, an unprovoked attack occurred on a province of the Ottoman Empire when, on a flimsy excuse, France occupied Algeria. However, the Empire was in no position to retake Algeria and the Sultan had no choice but to ac-

cept this defeat as well. At great territorial cost, a sort of stable peace was re-established with external powers, but it remained unclear if Sultan Mahmud II was in a position to execute the domestic reforms he had long been contemplating.

An internal revolt with multiple dimensions was brewing. The governor of Egypt was conniving to rebel against the Sultan and his rebellion would be a new phenomenon in Ottoman history. Previous provincial governors sought independence from Istanbul or to separate their provinces from that rule, but Mehmed Ali aimed much higher. He wanted to be the Sultan, to sit on the throne in Istanbul and be the Caliph as well.⁴ Originally, Mehmed Ali was sent to Cairo to uproot the Mamluks, feudal lords who administered Egypt based on their source of wealth and power in agriculture. During the reign of Sultan Selim III it became evident that the Mamluks were on the verge of seceding, so Selim appointed Mehmed Ali as Governor of Egypt to eliminate them, as well as the Wahhabis in the Arabian Peninsula who were in a state of revolt against the Sultan. Mehmed Ali set a trap for the Mamluk leaders. He invited them to a banquet at his residence and as they left when the banquet ended, he had them all killed in a narrow street where he had hidden his archers. It was the end of the Mamluks. His efforts to get rid of the Wahhabis were equally successful.

Mehmed Ali was an avaricious and greedy pasha, and his ultimate aim was to ascend the Ottoman throne. First, he created his own army of first rate fighting capability thanks to experts he brought in from France. He also built a sizeable navy. Both had been involved in quelling the revolt in the Morea Peninsula and in May 1832 he openly hoisted the flag of revolt against the Ottoman Empire. Under the command of his son İbrahim his forces captured Acre, in July they reached Alexandretta (today's Antakya) and within six months they entered Konya, an important Central Anatolian city. As will be seen in subsequent pages, Sultan Mahmud II eradicated the Janissaries in 1826 and the new army he organized

⁴ He once remarked to a British diplomat in Cairo, "I believe firmly that shortly Mahmud will be dethroned and his young son will take his place. In which case, I have no doubt that I and my son İbrahim will be invited to Istanbul as regents." Karal, *op.cit.*, p. 142.

had no combat experience and was defeated. The road from Konya to Istanbul was open.

Mahmud required the assistance of a Western European power, but it wasn't clear which would be the best ally for the Ottomans. France could be no such ally, since her policies were based on the assumption that Mehmed Ali might be a better ally than the Sultan in Istanbul. Austria, obsessed as it was with the Balkans, had no Eastern Mediterranean policy and no interest in that particular corner of the world. The only viable options were either Britain or Russia. Britain observed the developments in the Levant and remained neutral, but she was a better ally for Mahmud. He needed only to understand what it would take to change London's policy. In order to shake Britain's neutrality Mahmud II approached the Russians, believing an agreement between the Ottoman Empire and Russia would force Britain's hand. Such an agreement would fulfill the centuries-long Russian dream of access to the Eastern Mediterranean, which would threaten the route to British India. In April 1833 Mahmud II signed a provisional agreement with Russia, knowing full well that Russia had never been a friend of the Ottoman Empire. Quite the contrary. In fact, he despised Russia and clearly articulated this feeling in many of his *Hatt-ı Sherifs*. He was also believed the foreign policy of Britain was devious and full of intrigue. In order to shake the British policy towards his Empire, Britain had to see the agreement with Russia as detrimental to her interests. It therefore stands to reason that behind the agreement with Russia was the desire to force Britain to come to the aid of the Ottoman Empire in order to secure the route to India, which, prior to the opening of the Suez Canal, went overland between Port Said and Suez, and by sea between Suez and India via the Red Sea.⁵

Mahmud had no other recourse but to be devious himself. He allowed a Russian force of 15,000 to establish a base on the Anatolian side of the exit of the Bosphorus towards the Black Sea. This was enough for Britain to come to Mahmud's aid. France realized

⁵ See E. Muench, Mahmud II., *Padishah of the Ottomans, His Life, His Administration and His Reforms* (*Padishah der Osmanen, sein Leben, seine Regierung und seine Reformen*). Stuttgart: Verlag von Adolph Krabbe, 1839. Pp. 12–13.

that with British help, the Ottomans would likely be victorious, so they joined Britain and the Empire and forced Mehmed Ali to evacuate Anatolia. This short-term policy was successful in ridding Anatolia of Mehmed Ali's forces, but it was no long-term solution. For the longer term stability, it was imperative that Egypt cease being a threat to the Sultan's power. Mahmud's weapon was still the Ottoman control over the Straits. In July 1833 the provisional agreement was replaced with a new agreement (*Hünkâr İskelesi*), according to which the Russians and the Ottomans agreed to a mutual defense: the Russians would undertake to defend the Empire when threatened and the Ottomans would close the Straits to foreign powers when such powers threatened Russia.

This agreement created panic in Britain and France. They exerted diplomatic pressure on Russia to revoke the agreement and also began to prepare an expeditionary flotilla to force its way through the Straits and enter the Black Sea to sink the Russian fleet. Mehmed Ali, seizing the opportunity, decided to reignite the Ottoman-Egyptian War. His forces marched to Nizip (a district in modern Gaziantep) in blitzkrieg style and succeeded again to devastate Mahmud's new army. The Sultan died on July 1, 1839 before the news of his army's defeat reached him. His seventeen year old son Abdülmecid succeeded him as sultan.

Britain used all her persuasive power, mixed with threats, and forced Mehmed Ali to withdraw back to the previous border of Egypt and to recognize the Sultan in Istanbul as the ultimate power over Egypt. In turn, Abdülmecid recognized Mehmed Ali as the Governor of Egypt for life. Such were the main articles of the London Conference of 1840. The whole episode showed the success of Mahmud's long-term planning and his dexterity in using the Straits as an effective weapon against rapacious internal and external enemies.

ERADICATION OF THE JANISSARY ORDER

Mahmud II knew full well that without serious reforms of certain governance paradigms in the Empire, the Empire would be doomed. First and foremost amongst such reforms was the issue of what to do with the Janissaries. It had become clear that the Janissaries were no longer an effective fighting force and, moreover, they had ceased being the Sultan's power base and had become the primary threat to his power. Mahmud II also realized that a new

fighting force could not possibly exist in conjunction with the Janissary Corps. They had to be abolished.⁶ In order to do this, the Sultan required the allegiance of the *ulema* and riotous madrasah mullahs and to drive a wedge between them and the Janissaries. He extracted a fatwa from the *Sheikbulislâm* that stated learning the military sciences in the European style was not in contravention to *sharia*. He showered the religious leadership with perks, gifts and pecuniary benefits.⁷ He also named his new army “the Army of Suleiman the Magnificent”, possibly inspired by Koçi Bey’s *Treatise*. In May 1826 he called for a meeting of high ranking Janissary officers and the *Sheikbulislâm*. They discussed at length the miserable condition of the Janissary Order and their complete lack of knowledge of the science of war. The Head of the Janissary Order pledged his soldiers were ready to accept European-style training. Then the Sultan, who came to the meeting with a prepared plan, stated that 150 soldiers from each battalion (*Orta*) would be selected and trained in the European style. The seed of the new army would compose of 7,650 such soldiers and would start the European training regime immediately. They would be called *eshkindji* but would remain a part of the Janissary Corps. The Head of the Order accepted the proposal and signed an agreement to that effect. This, of course, was a ploy by the Sultan to force unfavorable conditions on the Janissaries, inciting them to revolt. Subsequent events developed as Mahmud hoped. High ranking officers returning to the Janissary barracks began to instigate unrest among the rank and file, saying that they would not accept the war methods of the infidels, and would rather follow the road of their ancestors.

It was June 15, 1826 and, yet again, the Janissaries revolted. Mahmud had extracted a pledge from the artillery corps (*cebeci*) that they would remain loyal to the Sultan, and the *ulema* and madrasah students, fearful of losing their newly acquired privileges, gathered

⁶ It is claimed that Mahmud said, “If we do not obliterate the Janissaries, cats will roam the ruins of Istanbul.” Niall Ferguson, *Civilization: The West and the Rest*. New York: Penguin Press, 2011, p. 88.

⁷ *Mahmud II: Istanbul in the Process of Being Rebuilt (II. Mahmud: Yeniden Yapılanma Sürecinde İstanbul)*. Istanbul: Avrupa Kültür Başkenti Yayınları, 2010.

in the forecourt of the palace. Sultan Mahmud II did one more thing that no other sultan had considered doing, and called forth the people of the Empire to support him. He realized that the Sultan's true base of authority was the people and not the riotous and conniving Janissaries. He gave the order to hoist the banner of the Prophet Mohammed up the tower of Topkapı Palace, indicating jihad against the enemy, and sent his faithful servants to every corner of Istanbul asking the people to gather around him. Then he gave a final order to the artillery corps to bombard the Janissary barracks. A blood bath ensued as the front of the barracks collapsed and the ruins were full of dead and wounded Janissaries. Some 6,000 were captured and quickly hanged. Some 20,000 Janissaries who succeeded in escaping were captured within a month and summarily executed. Mahmud announced the complete dissolution of the Janissary Order on a day that entered Ottoman history as an "auspicious event". A new army named the Victorious Soldiers of Mohammed (*asakir-i measure-i Muhammediye*) was in the making, beginning with 12,000 soldiers drilled in the European style. Their loyalty was to the Sultan and to the Sultan alone.⁸

Sultan Mahmud II, knowing Mehmed Ali had well-trained officers, requested twelve Egyptian officers as trainers. Mehmed Ali rejected the request.⁹ Neither France nor Britain was willing to help Mahmud in the formation of his new army, since public opinion in both countries was very much in favor of the Greeks. Austria and Russia were not viable sources of trainers; so far away Prussia was the Sultan's only hope. A high ranking Prussian officer, Helmut von Moltke, was appointed the senior consultant to train the Ottoman trainers. Moltke prepared a manual of organization¹⁰ and the first step was the establishment of the War Academy, as well as a Military Medical School. A new form of military administration was in the making.

⁸ A. Ubicini, *Letters on Turkey (Lettres sur la Turquie)*. Paris, 1853.

⁹ Lewis, *The Emergence ... op. cit.*, p. 80.

¹⁰ Helmut von Moltke, *Letters of Moltke from Turkey (Moltke'nin Türkiye Mektupları)*. Istanbul: Remzi Ktabevi, 1959, various pages.



Figure 4: Mahmud II and his son Abdülmecid I

REORGANIZATION OF THE CIVIL ADMINISTRATION

Until the reign of Sultan Mahmud II the Ottoman public administration had been decentralized. Provincial notables had substantial power rooted in their roles as local administrators that were based on inheritance or local customs. Moreover, the feudal fiefs were no longer compatible with rational public management. Since the intention of the Sultan was to be the only authority in the Empire,

these organizations had to be rendered ineffective, preferably eliminated. The fiefdoms could not clash with his authority.

Mahmud began to organize the central government on a functional basis. This was the first attempt in the Ottoman history at a well-defined cabinet of ministries with clear delineation of authority and function. The Office of Commander-in-Chief and the Admiralty, which were previously separate, became united in a new office called the Ministry of War. Up to this point, internal affairs were administered by a lieutenant of the Grand Vizier (*kethüda*). Mahmud eliminated the post of *kethüda* and made the administration of internal affairs the responsibility of the new Ministry of the Interior. He then reorganized the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and united two separate offices that dealt with legal matters under the new Ministry of Justice (*Nezaret-i Adliye*). The fractured revenue collections, expenditures, budgetary matters and the imperial mint came under a new Ministry of Finance, which assumed all the financial functions of the former Imperial Treasury and separated the treasury of the Sultan from that of the state. The central administration of the Ottoman Empire was taking a form that looked very much like the cabinet of any European state.

Almost from the beginning of the Ottoman state, the *Sheikhulislâm*, who was appointed by the Sultan (the principal), wielded extraordinary power. With his fatwa he could easily depose a sultan, as had been the case with Mahmud's predecessor, Selim III. Yet the *Sheikhulislâm* was appointed by the Sultan, so his power was a great anomaly and incompatible with the position of the principal. If the *Sheikhulislâm* was appointed by the Sultan as agent, it should have been inconceivable for the agent to decide whether the Sultan should reign or not. With a single decision Mahmud took this power away from the *Sheikhulislâm*. He could no longer issue fatwas to depose sultans. He became merely a minister among ministers, in charge of religious affairs. His portfolio included being the traditional leader of the religious class, but the Chief Justices of Rumelia and Anatolia, who were previously viziers in their own right, became his subordinates.

These drastic changes did not mean that the Ottoman Empire was no longer a theocratic state: the Sultan wielded absolute power over two worlds, the secular and the religious, for he was also the Caliph, but the *Sheikhulislâm's* wings were clipped.

The reorganization that started in 1835 continued until the end of 1838. The Ministry of Trade, the Ministry of Public Works and the Ministry of Agriculture came into being with clearly defined responsibilities. In order to fortify various ministries and to review legislative bills, several supreme councils were instituted. The reorganization of the higher administration also brought a new word into the lexicon: Supreme Porte (*Bâb-ı Âli*). Originally the seat of the Grand Vizier (who was first named *Sadrâzam*) and some of the ministries, the Supreme Porte later came to designate the Ottoman Government generally. Another important component of the reform of the public administration was the first institution of salaried workers in the government. They would no longer subsist on fees collected from transactions. Their appointments also became permanent rather than being based on annually renewed contracts.

Drastic changes, reorganization and the new concept of state administration were not limited to the central government. Mahmud also wanted to reorganize the provincial governments, especially with regard to taxation. Land holding farmers paid taxes based on long-established customs that were anachronistic and inefficient. The Sultan wanted to establish a tax system based on an individual's ability to pay, so he ordered a census and cadastral survey, first in a single province and then slowly expanded throughout the Empire.

Until the time of Mahmud II municipal administration was extremely limited. Commercial and trade guilds regulated and controlled essential services and the *muhtesip* collected license fees and similar taxes on behalf of the treasury. There were no police or fire-fighters as these functions were entrusted to the Janissaries. Judges enforced the law in Islamic courts and non-Muslim subjects had recourse to their own courts.

As a result of Mahmud II's eradication of the Janissary Order, a separate municipal police force was set up and new fire stations were built and manned by civilian firefighters. As part of the new census structure built for tax and conscription purposes, local mayors were appointed in every city of the Empire to count the population. A newly established Council of Elders also injected a new dimension of governance: popular participation in city administration.

EDUCATION AND NEW SCHOOLS

Sultan Mahmud II recognized that a prime obstacle to the Empire's progress was the ignorance of the general population. Children attended schools for no more than three or four years to learn to read and write and to study some of the surahs of the Koran. Any further education for Ottoman students consisted of many years in a madrasah to become judges, imams and to occupy a civil service post. Such limited education at the primary neighborhood schools (*mahalle mektebi*) was far from adequate to supply the needed, educated workforce for the Empire. The right thing to do was to overhaul the entire education system, beginning with the first grade. Mahmud was courageous and determined to implement reform, but he was also prudent and pragmatic. To tackle the primary education in so swift a manner would have created insurmountable resistance as the mullahs who taught in these schools would riot and rise up against the Sultan. He therefore jumpstarted education reform by establishing new secondary schools called *rüşdiye*. These were open to Muslim males who would learn grammar, history and mathematics. Those who graduated would be ready to pursue either a military career by entering the military academy or a civil service career by studying at newly established schools of law and education, where they learned Arabic, French, geography, history, administration and mathematics, as well as the technical aspects of the school's specialty. They could also make a career in the navy or army by studying in either service's engineering schools or attending the imperial school of medicine after graduating from the new secondary schools (*rüşdiye*). In addition to the schools mentioned above, purely technical schools were also established, which quickly attracted thousands of students. While the training required for a profession as an engineer or physician took more than mere attendance at these technical schools, they employed foreign teachers who provided cutting-edge European instruction and knowledge to their students. They were also essentially secular in nature and while these and other educational reforms were perhaps not entirely successful in Sultan Mahmud II's reign, they formed the backbone of additional reforms during the *Tanzimat* period identified with his son, Sultan Abdülmecid.

THE PATH TO WESTERNIZATION

While these structural changes were taking place, new relationships and behavior in governance took shape. Mahmud also changed the appearance of the Muslim Turks who were the Empire's bureaucrats by ordering them to wear Western coats, trousers and capes, and forbidding the wear of the turban, which was replaced with the North African fez. To further westernize society, he established a European style music school and orchestra in the palace.

Sultan Mahmud II initiated many reforms but did not see all the changes they wrought; he died of tuberculosis on July 1, 1839. However, his son and several able statesmen followed in his path and enriched his reforms.¹¹

Sultan Mahmud II's reign can be summarized by the short but keen assessment of Roderick H. Davison,

"There were external stimuli which prompted Mahmud II's measures of political modernization. In addition, he was faced with internal revolts and needed to bolster his domestic position. He abolished a number of the traditional offices of state, and created new ones dependent on his own fiat. The new bureaucracy he began to build was relatively European and modern both in organization and in type of personnel appointed to it. Though Mahmud himself had no experience of the West and knew no Western language, he presided over a period in which Turkish institutions were genuinely started on the path of Westernization."¹²

¹¹ For the minute details of the administrative and education reforms of Sultan Mahmud II see Shaw & Ezel Kural, *op.cit.*, pp. 36–51.

¹² Roderick H. Davison. *Essays in Ottoman and Turkish History, 1774–1923*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990, p. 77.

THE REFORM EDICT

On November 3, 1839 in the presence of the Sultan, high officials of the Ottoman Empire, ambassadors from European powers and clerical leaders from the Muslim and non-Muslim faiths gathered in the garden of the Topkapı Palace, also known as the *Gülhane*. The newly appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs began to read the Imperial Edict (known as *Hatt-ı Gülhane*, or *Hatt-ı Hümayun*) of Sultan Abdülmecid:

“It is known throughout the world that since the establishment of the Ottoman State, the precepts of the Koran and the laws of the land being held supreme, the Empire grew with force and grandeur and its subjects, without exception, have had with great ease the highest prosperity. But during the last one hundred and fifty years, for a multitude of reasons... it succumbed to weakness and poverty...”

Only four months prior, on July 1, 1839, at the age of eighteen, Abdülmecid had become the thirty-first sultan of the Ottoman Empire. He inherited an empire that had, for the previous century and a half, consistently lost its stature and power. The Empire's frontiers still extended from the shores of the Danube to the Persian Gulf and from Algeria to the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, but it was confronted with myriad internal and external problems. It was too weak to defend and protect itself and alliances with European powers became imperative. However, the European powers were divided in their policies towards the Empire.

Austria and Russia aimed to dismember it. Britain and France, in contrast, feared and resisted its demise. Their primary policy aim in foreign affairs was to maintain the balance of power in Europe and prevent Russia from moving south towards the Mediterranean and thereby threatening their interests. This could only be prevented if the status quo vis-à-vis the Ottoman Empire were maintained.

The Empire itself was not in a position to conduct an independent foreign policy but it took advantage of the balance of power in Europe and France and Britain's desire to maintain it. The Ottomans needed the friendship and alliance of France and Britain for survival, and they were ready to recognize the Empire's territorial boundaries upon assurances of reorganization and reform.

The Imperial Edict read in the *Gülhane* ushered in a new order called *Tanzimat* in Turkish: re-organization or re-ordering. Its strategic value was to secure alliances in Europe, but in practical terms it extended the reforms of Sultan Mahmud II (though he goes unmentioned in the Edict itself). The great force behind the reorganization movement was the Foreign Minister, Mustafa Reşit Pasha,¹ in whom the young sultan had great confidence and who, while ambassador to London and Paris, had studied the governments of France and Britain and had a thorough understanding of European realpolitik. Indeed, the Edict was penned by Mustafa Reşit Pasha and with it the Empire entered a period of radical overhaul.

The Imperial Edict made official such principals as the security of life, honor, and property of all Ottoman subjects, an orderly system of taxation, a regular system of military conscription, fair and public trials of persons accused of crimes and, most remarkably, equality before the law of persons of all religions. The expectation was that through such guarantees and reforms the loyalty of all the Empire's subjects would be secured, separatist tendencies diminished and the Empire's territorial integrity preserved.

The Edict stressed first and foremost the security of an individual subject's life, property and honor:

¹ Mustafa Reşit Pasha (1800–1858) was in many ways the real architect of the nineteenth century Ottoman reforms. He was born in İstanbul. His father, whom he lost when he was 10 years old, taught him how to read and write. He then attended the mosque school but did not complete a formal education. He entered government employment at an early age, advanced quickly, and in 1832 became the chief secretary to the official in charge of foreign affairs. In 1834 he was appointed ambassador to Paris where he worked on mastering the French language. A series of diplomatic appointments followed. He became foreign minister in 1839, was dismissed in 1841, but returned in 1845. He was appointed Grand Vizier in 1846, a post which he held six times.

“There is nothing more important in this world than life and honor. Even if one is without malice, when one sees these components of life in danger one has recourse to defend them in any way one can. But such actions would damage the state and the country. When a person has the security of life and honor, he will not digress from righteousness and will use all his effort to serve his country.”²

While applicable to the entire Ottoman population, the Imperial Edict emphasized the responsibilities of the bureaucrats and religious leaders and officials:

“If any vizier or *ulema* were to digress and act contrary to sharia, the appropriate punishment will be applied without any consideration to rank. To this end, a new criminal code will be promulgated.”

Throughout Ottoman history, the management of the tax system was a perennial problem, and “tax farming” was particularly problematic and inefficient. The Edict instituted reforms of the Empire’s tax system:

“The defense of the realm entails expenditures. These are financed by taxes. It is, therefore, imperative that paying taxes be imposed and administered justly... Tax farming is nothing more than the state’s abdication of its responsibility, leaving financial administration in the hands of the few... Henceforth, taxes will be imposed according to an ability to pay, taking into account the level of income and wealth of a given individual.”

Recruitment into the army was also problematic in the Empire and the Edict addressed this too, emphasizing the methods of induction and the length of military service:

“Until now recruitment was done without regard to the density of population of different provinces. In some instances, recruitment was so high that it damaged local economic activity.

² The excerpts in this section rely partially on Fuat Andic and Suphan Andic, *The Last of the Ottoman Grandees*. Istanbul: ISIS Press, 1996, and Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2012.

In more cases than not, soldiers served in the army throughout their life. It is imperative these errors be corrected and military service not exceed four or five years.”

The Edict was directed not only to Ottoman subjects, but to the European Powers as well:

“This Edict is being addressed to the people of the Empire and to friendly powers who, through their ambassadors in Istanbul, are witnessing this new order, which, with the help of Allah, will last forever.”³

These institutional changes to the overall Ottoman paradigm of governance necessitated new organizational structures in addition to reformation of the existing ones. Otherwise the proposed order could not have been implemented. The first such change was to redefine the legislative function of Supreme Council of Judicial Ordinances (*Meclis-i Vâlâ-i Ahkâm-ı Adliye*), more commonly known as the Grand Council of Justice, which was to play a crucial role throughout the *Tanzimat* period. The Council was empowered to exercise a supervisory and quasi-legislative function. It was split into two bodies in 1854: one concerned strictly with legal matters and the other became the High Council of Reform (*Meclis-i Âli-i Tanzimat*), also known as the Tanzimat Council, with general responsibility for the entire reform program. Âli Pasha became the first president of the Tanzimat Council.

The new penal code, borrowed largely from the French, was completed in 1840 (and subsequently amended in 1850, 1854, and 1857). Mixed tribunals, composed of Muslims and non-Muslims, were set up to deal with commercial cases involving Ottoman subjects and foreigners, as well as criminal cases involving citizens of the same nation. Mixed police courts followed thereafter. Christian testimony against Muslims was accepted and a new commercial

³ For details of the Edict see E. Engelhardt, *Turkey and the Tanzimat* (*La Turquie et le Tanzimat*). 2 Volumes, 1882–1884; Various authors, *Tanzimat*. Istanbul: Ministry of Education, 1940. Shaw & Kural, *op. cit.*, pp. 55–115; Davison, *op. cit.*, pp. 96–11; Bilâl Eryılmaz, *Tanzimat and Modernization in Administration* (*Tanzimat ve Yönetimde Modernleşme*). Istanbul: İşaret Yayınları, 1992.

code entered into effect in 1850. Reflecting additional reforms on the matter of equality, Christians were admitted to the military medical school after 1839.

The trend of dividing the country into smaller provinces (*vilâyet*s) and these into further subdivisions continued. The Sublime Porte attempted to devise a system of central control over the administration of the provinces that also provided a degree of administrative flexibility by giving the inhabitants of each locality some say in the local government so that such governance might be efficient and expeditious. This was accomplished in several ways, but especially by adding a council (*meclis*) to each province's governing structure and in which the non-Muslim communities were represented. The system did not work smoothly as inefficiency and corruption prevailed. Capable governors and officials were few in number and appointments frequently resulted from intrigue, influence peddling and bribery rather than merit. Even able governors did not remain in one place for long. Additionally, such positions often carried no salary, so fees were levied on transactions carried out with citizens to provide services. Salaries of other officials were so low as to make honesty incompatible with a reasonable standard of living, incentivizing corruption. And there was opposition to change from those who stood to lose, and among them were local Christian notables. The Christians claimed they were not represented sufficiently in the new councils, and their claim was supported by the European powers.

As mentioned above, the Edict brought into effect a regular system of military conscription and military service was reduced from lifetime to five year commitments. However, in 1843 this new system was made applicable only to Muslim subjects, as non-Muslims objected to serving in the military when they could be exempted by paying a tax called *aiyye*. Only a handful of Greek sailors were hired by the navy, so the principle of equality before the law was postponed with regard to military obligations and service.

The system of tax farming (the sale of the concession to collect taxes in a given area to the highest bidder) was abolished in 1840. This system placed the financing of the government in the hands and at the whim of a single individual whose primary concern was his own self-interest, not the funding of the state. The tax farmer recouped from the peasantry a profit for himself that was over and above the sum due to state for taxes, which gave rise to

injustices. Though in some districts the direct collection of taxes by administrative officials lessened the exploitation of the peasantry, this system also became involved in corruption and failed to provide sufficient revenue, so that within two years tax farming was reintroduced in such districts. The insufficiency of revenue led the government in 1842 to issue the first printed paper money in Ottoman history. The old coinage was partially withdrawn from circulation, new coins were minted and their exchange rate with foreign currencies was fixed. With growing deficits and negative trade imbalances the new coins quickly lost their value and the Empire's first bank was set up in 1849 under French and Italian direction. The Crimean War of 1853 further aggravated the fiscal situation and foreign loans were negotiated in 1854 and 1855. Part of the tax revenue was earmarked for servicing these loans and inflation soared, in part due to the Crimean War.

Tanzimat also brought changes to the educational system. The constant defeat of Ottoman armies by European forces and the supremacy of Western technology accentuated the need to restructure and strengthen Ottoman institutions. In his 1845 edict, Sultan Abdülmecid asserted that ignorance in secular and religious matters was the prime obstacle to progress and the establishment of schools to teach scientific and industrial subjects should have the highest priority. This marked the beginning of western-style education in the Empire. An *ad hoc* committee examined the fundamental problem of providing a more modern — and therefore secular — education than was at the time possible in the Empire's grammar and religious schools. Among the members of the committee were Âli Efendi, senior chancery officer and Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs, and Fuad Efendi, chief dragoman (translator) of the Imperial Council. The committee submitted its report in 1846 and recommended the creation of a system of education, parallel to and not in place of the Muslim schools, from primary through secondary grades to university. The Council of Public Education (*Meclis-i Maarif-i Umumiye*) was established to draft the necessary ordinances and plans, and to supervise the new educational institutions. However, progress was slow. The university failed to develop and very few secondary schools opened. Still, the Academy of Science (*Encümen-i Daniş*) was founded in 1850 to prepare textbooks, including the translation of foreign works.

Institutional and organizational changes started by Sultan Abdülmecid survived his death in June 1861 and continued under his successor, Sultan Abdülaziz, until he was dethroned in May 1876. Thus ended the 37-year period known in Ottoman history as the *Tanzimat Era*.



Figure 5: Mustafa Reşit Pasha



Figure 6: Fuad Pasha

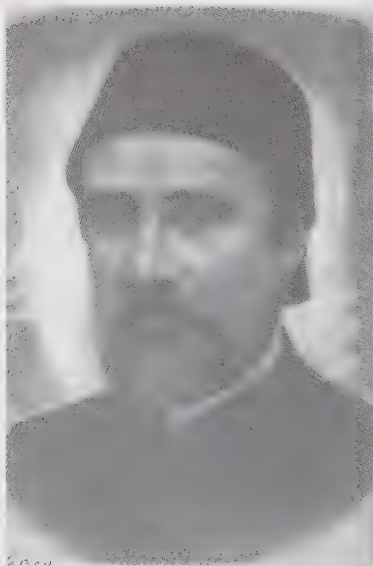


Figure 7: Âli Pasha

THE CRIMEAN WAR AND THE CONCERT OF EUROPE

Sultan Abdülmecid was very different from his father. Although he wholeheartedly supported *Tanzimat*, its management was essentially left to three extraordinarily capable statesmen: Mustafa Reşit Pasha, Fuad Pasha¹ and Âli Pasha.² However, like that of his father and

¹ Fuad Pasha was five times foreign minister and twice Grand Vizier. He was born in Istanbul in 1815 into a well-to-do and cultured family and graduated from the new medical school where French was the language of teaching. In 1834 he entered the army medical corps and subsequently joined the Translation Bureau in 1837. He advanced rapidly through the ranks of Ottoman bureaucracy and became foreign minister in Âli Pasha's first cabinet. This marked the first collaboration between the two. In 1854 he successfully repressed the Greek insurgents and was subsequently appointed to the Council of Reform. In 1855 he became foreign minister again under Âli Pasha and became the President of the Council of Reform for the second time in 1857, foreign minister once again in 1858 and attended the Paris conference on Wallachia and Moldova the same year. In 1860 he went to Damascus and Lebanon to solve the conflict between the Druzes and Maronites and succeeded in developing a new administrative statute for Lebanon. In 1861 he once again became foreign minister and was then appointed Grand Vizier. As the Grand Vizier he dealt with the Empire's financial crisis, negotiated the loan of 1862, succeeded in concluding the Montenegro campaign and helped secure new constitutions for the Greek, Armenian and Jewish communities. He resigned in January 1863. In his letter of resignation to the Sultan he raised concerns about the Empire's financial difficulties and the dangers of Balkan nationalism. He became the President of the Grand Council of Justice and subsequently Commander-in-chief and Minister of War, but soon thereafter he was again appointed Grand Vizier and stayed on in that position for three years marked by the 1864 Law of the Provinces, the authorization of the

many before him, the reign of Sultan Abdülmecid was marred by internal revolts, particularly in Lebanon, Crete and Mora, as well as by foreign wars, the most important being the Russo-Ottoman War known in history as the Crimean War. In the 1850s a concert of powers emerged to contain Russian predation against the Ottoman Empire and the Crimean War was the result.

construction of the Suez Canal and the acceptance of the unification of Moldavia and Wallachia. He became foreign minister again in 1867, again under Âli Pasha, whom he deputized when he went to Crete to crush the rebellion. He died on February 12, 1869, after a long illness. See Mahmud Kemal İnal, *The Last Grand Viziers in the Ottoman Times (Osmanlı Devrinde Son Sadrazamlar)*. Istanbul: Milli Eğitim Basımevi, 1964. Third printing. Pp. 149–195.

² Âli Pasha was born in 1815 to a poor shopkeeper and was named Mehmed Emin. After only three years of rudimentary education he committed himself to self-teaching for the rest of his life. He entered the civil service in 1829 as a secretary in the Imperial Council. Due to his extraordinary talent and diligence he was given the *nom de plume* Âli, meaning “great.” In 1833 he transferred to the Translation Bureau where he studied French intensively. Between 1835 and 1839 he served as secretary to the embassies in Vienna, St. Petersburg and London. Mustafa Reşit Pasha appointed him ambassador to London in 1840 where he served three and a half years. Thereafter, his rise in the Ottoman bureaucracy was phenomenal. In 1846 he was appointed Foreign Minister for the first time. In 1848 he was bestowed with the titles of Vizier and Pasha. He was decorated several times by Sultan Abdülmecid, served as Governor first of İzmir and then Bursa, and in 1855 he represented the Ottoman Empire as Foreign Minister in the preliminary Peace Conference during the Crimean War. A year later he prepared the Imperial Edict of 1856 and participated as the Plenipotentiary Delegate at the Paris Peace Conference that concluded the Crimean War. Between 1856 and 1867 he served several times as Grand Vizier and Minister of Foreign Affairs, dealt with uprisings in Crete and Mora, and in 1857 was again, for the fifth time, appointed Grand Vizier. He was repeatedly decorated by Sultan Abdülaziz, as well as by foreign sovereigns. Among the three Pashas, Âli was perhaps the most intelligent and the most diligent. His aim was always to achieve complete success in whatever he set out to do, but he was also controversial. The Young Ottomans, notably Namık Kemal and Ziya Pasha, directed their poisonous criticism against him as he was not in favor of a constitutional monarchy. See İnal, *op. cit.*, pp. 4–58.

The Crimean War was the result of ongoing antagonism and rivalry between Russia on the one hand and France, Britain and the Ottoman Empire on the other. Britain sought to maintain the Ottoman Empire as it was in order to foil the Tsar's ambition to dominate Istanbul and the Straits connecting the Black Sea with the Mediterranean and to prevent Russian access to a warm water port. The Eastern Mediterranean was key strategic territory for Britain as it included the shortest route to India. Moreover, the Ottoman Empire was an export market for British manufactured goods. For France, the issue was not economic but religious in nature. Napoleon III considered himself the protector of all Catholic Christians, so he could not accept Russian competition in Jerusalem, where the Catholic Church dominated Christian affairs. To the Tsar, the Ottoman Empire was "the sick man of Europe," about to die and an obstacle to Russian expansion, but to Britain, the Empire only needed treatment to survive. Committed to an imperialist trajectory, the Tsar looked for an excuse to weaken the Ottoman Empire and capture Istanbul. In February 28, 1853 the Russian Ambassador, General Menchikov, went to Istanbul with a series of demands and with instructions not to negotiate with the Ottoman Government, but simply to extract concessions. He arrived with the following demands from the Tsarist government in St. Petersburg: the maintenance of the Church of Bethlehem would be transferred from the Catholic Church to the Orthodox Church and Russia would build an Orthodox church and a hospital in Jerusalem. Most significant of all, all Ottoman Orthodox subjects would be under the Tsar's protection. This last demand was completely unacceptable to the Ottoman Government, though the other religious demands could be negotiated. Menchikov indicated to the then Grand Vizier Fuad Pasha that there was no room for negotiation and that an Ottoman rejection of Tsar's demands would mean war.

Menchikov returned to Russia without obtaining any concessions and Russian troops, under the command of Alexander Gorchakov, entered Wallachia and Moldova on July 2, 1853. On October 4, 1853 the commander of the Ottoman forces in Rumelia, Ömer Pasha, sent an ultimatum to Gorchakov demanding he vacate the two Ottoman provinces within fifteen days. After fifteen days elapsed, Ömer Pasha and an Ottoman force of 100,000 attacked the Russian forces and began to force them out of the provinces. Believing his European rivals would not intervene on behalf

of the Ottomans, the Tsar sought to establish supremacy in the Black Sea and his forces obliterated the Ottoman navy trapped in the Bay of Sinop. However, the Tsar had miscalculated and this turn of events drew in the French and the British. On January 11, 1854, they asked Russia to withdraw its naval forces to Sebastopol and at the same time sent their warships to the eastern Mediterranean. On April 10, 1854, France, Britain and the Ottoman Empire signed an agreement to contain Russian aggression and the first battles of the Crimean War began in Odessa. Sailing through the Straits, British warships bombarded Odessa on April 24 and prepared for an attack on Sebastopol. Their forces landed in the various ports of the Crimea, including Evpatoria and Sebastopol. A series of battles between Russia and the allied forces of France, Britain, the Ottoman Empire and the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia forced the Russians to abandon Sebastopol. In the meantime, Tsar Nicolas I had died and was succeeded by his son Alexander, who disliked war and decided to pursue an armistice with the allies.

As this book is not a military history, no further details of the war are warranted. Suffice it to say that it was poorly managed by both sides and cost 300,000 lives for Russia, the Ottoman Empire and its allies. In addition to the battles in the Crimean peninsula, the Russians also attacked the Ottoman province of Kars on October 25, 1855. This created the fear that the capture of Kars would open the door to Central Anatolia to the Russians, something the allies could not accept. Since Russia had signaled preparedness to enter into a ceasefire and, ultimately, a peace treaty, the allies met in Vienna in February 1856 and came to an agreement as to what the chief articles of the peace treaty would be. Ali Pasha, who was then minister of foreign affairs, represented the Ottoman Empire as chief delegate. They agreed on four articles to form the basis of the peace treaty.

- The first article demanded Russia withdraw from Wallachia and Moldova and have no influence in either Ottoman province. In exchange, the Sultan would bestow on them special status.
- The second article established free commercial traffic on the Danube River for all.

- The third article declared the Black Sea neutral and allowed the Ottoman Empire and Russia to maintain minimal naval power only for the protection of their coasts.
- The fourth article stated that Russia would give up forever her aspiration to be the protector of the Orthodox Christian subjects of the Ottoman Empire.³

As will be seen below, this agreement opened a new political paradigm for the Empire in Europe.

The first meeting of the Paris Treaty Conference took place on February 25, 1856. The President was Alexander Walewski, Minister of Foreign Affairs of France. The Ottoman Empire was represented by Âli Pasha, Britain by the Minister of Foreign Affairs George Clarendon, Russia by Prince Alexey Orlov and Piedmont-Sardinia by Prime Minister Count Camillo Cavour. Due to the regional importance of the Danube River, Austria and Prussia were also invited.

At the beginning of the meeting there was hardly any divergence of opinion among the allies. The starting point for Britain was the points agreed upon in the Vienna meeting, as well as the agreement Britain had signed with the Empire on March 12, 1854, which guaranteed Ottoman territorial integrity. France had also had joined that agreement and, in exchange, the Empire accepted demands to issue another Imperial Reform Edict. The Vienna agreement on the commercial traffic on the Danube suited Austria and to this the allies had no objection. For Piedmont-Sardinia none of the issues to be discussed in Paris were of any importance. It had joined the allies in the war because Count Cavour was hoping to gain the sympathy and help of France in his quest to free parts of northern Italy from Austrian occupation. The Ottoman position was quite clear. It wanted to enter the concert of Europe and rejected unconditionally the protection, direct or indirect, of its Christian subjects by Russia or any other European state. The re-

³ For details of the Vienna Agreement see Archives de Ministère des Affaires Étrangères. *Mémoires et Documents: Turquie*, Vol. 87, Microfiche; Fuat Andic & Suphan Andic, *The Crimean War, Âli Pasha and the Treaty of Paris (Kırım Savaşı, Âli Paşa ve Paris Antlaşması)*. Istanbul: EREN, 202, pp. 45, 157–165.

form edict of 1839 had already established equality between Christian and Moslem citizens and to reiterate this with a new edict was no sacrifice.

THE IMPERIAL REFORM EDICT OF 1856

The new Edict was drafted by Âli Pasha and announced by the Sultan in February 1856, a few days before the commencement of deliberations in Paris. In essence, it was a repetition of the *Gülhane* Edict. A French version was conveyed to all participants at the Paris Conference and the main clauses of the Edict are summarized as follows:

- All Ottoman subjects would become equal before the law.
- Every person's rights to life, property and honor would be considered inalienable.
- Religious leaders would swear an oath of loyalty to the Sultan and the Ottoman State and they would receive appropriate salaries from the state and collect no compensation from their communities. Each non-Moslem community would have a consultative council.
- All Ottoman citizens would have the right to be employed by the state and they would also have the right to attend any school without discrimination.
- Any dispute of criminal or commercial nature would be judged by mixed courts in open sessions.
- To serve in the military would become obligatory to Muslims and non-Muslims alike.
- Tax farming would be abolished.
- Non-Ottoman subjects could own property and European capital could be invested to develop agriculture and trade.

The Edict was well received by the Conference participants. However, the reaction among Ottomans was rather negative.⁴

⁴ The reaction of the Ottomans was articulated by the official scribe. "The holy rights our ancestors earned with their blood are now totally lost. The nation of Muslims [referring to Muslim Ottomans] was the dom-

The Conference ended on March 30, 1856. Composed of 34 articles, the treaty brought a new order to Europe in which the Ottoman Empire, for a brief time, became an equal partner. This had been the main objective of Âli Pasha.⁵

Although the Conference accepted the integrity of the Ottoman Empire, the participants argued over what exactly this guarantee meant. Was it the land that was guaranteed? Were borders going to be respected? Âli Pasha succeeded in including a guarantee of the Empire's borders into the treaty. Article 7 of the treaty reads as follows:

"His Majesty the Emperor of France, His Majesty the Emperor of Austria, Her Majesty the Queen of Great Britain and Ireland, His Majesty the King of Prussia, His Majesty the Emperor of all Russians, His Majesty the King of Prussia and His Majesty the King of Sardinia declare that the Sublime Porte accepts to participate in the advantages of the public law and the concert of Europe. Their Majesties, on their part, commit themselves to respect the independence and the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire, and guarantee together the strict maintenance of this commitment. Should the guarantee be infringed upon by one, it will be considered an infringement by all signatories."

Article 8 goes on to fortify the previous article by stating:

"Should there be any disagreement between the Sublime Porte and any one of the signatories, the Sublime Porte will seek the mediation of the other signatories of this treaty before any military action is taken."

inant power. Now they have lost their right. For them, today is a day of sorrow and mourning." See Cevdet Pasha, *Memoranda 1-12 (Tezâkir 1-12)*. Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1953. P.68. Cevdet Pasha certainly was not the only one to make such an argument. The enemies of Âli Pasha would use the edict as a vehicle for their attacks against him.

⁵ This article was extremely important for Âli Pasha. He had used all his talent and persuasive powers to secure it, leading to Count Cavour to remark, "There is no greater diplomat in this meeting than Âli Pasha."

Articles 3 and 4 returned the geo-political situation to the status quo of the *ante bellum* period. There were no objections to the irredentism of the Ottoman Empire and Russia, so the city of Kars and its fort were to be returned to the Empire and Crimea, the major cities of which were occupied by the allied powers, was to be returned to Russia. These were relatively easy matters on which there was hardly any discussion. However, thorny issues began to emerge, such as the status of Wallachia and Moldova. The French delegation insisted these two provinces be united under a vassal status nominally within the Ottoman Empire since these two principalities had common Latin ancestry and a common language. Austria and Great Britain objected as it was not in their interest that France acquire a foothold on the Black Sea. Âli Pasha concurred.

Finally an agreement was reached and articulated in Articles 22–27. Russia would evacuate these two principalities, suzerainty of the Ottoman Empire would continue, but the Sublime Porte would convene a Divan to articulate the desires of the local population and the manner of conducting their internal affairs. Finally, the principalities gained the right to organize an army for internal security.

The issue of the status of the Christians living within the Empire transpired to be another problematic issue. France believed that since the Ottoman Empire had been accepted into the concert of Europe, European public laws should be applicable in the Empire. The Russian position, however, was to prevent the elimination of any capitulations⁶ and the Russian delegate suggested the con-

⁶ The etymology of the word ‘capitulations’ is not from ‘to capitulate’ (i.e. to surrender), but from the Latin *capitulatus*, past participle of *capitulare*, meaning sections or chapters in an agreement. Originally “capitulations” was translated into Turkish as “imperial contract” (one which regulated diplomatic and commercial activity between the Ottoman state and Christendom). They referred, explicitly or implicitly, to the general security of non-Muslims residing or merely doing business in the Ottoman Empire, and of their property, including testamentary rights, freedom of worship, burial, dress, repairs to ships, protection of lives and goods from pirates in Ottoman territory, consular jurisdiction and responsibility of the individual. They were granted upon application with a promise of

friendship, peace and loyalty. The Empire expected from the applicant state political, economic and financial interests in return for the privileges it conceded, such as a political alliance, access to scarce goods and raw materials and the collection of customs revenue. The provisions of the contract conceding the privileges overrode, in cases of conflict, the laws and regulations having only local application.

The first Ottoman capitulations were granted to Genoa in 1352. Numerous others followed over the centuries and they gradually became instruments of political subordination until they were abolished in 1923 with the Treaty of Lausanne.

Capitulations and their effectiveness varied with political relations. By 1604, the French were granted the protection of Christian pilgrims to Jerusalem and of monks dwelling there. This led to subsequent French claims to protect all Catholics in the Empire. By 1683 new privileges began to be granted for political assistance. Austria obtained full capitulations in 1718 after the Treaty of Passarowitz, which were renewed in 1747. Ships were allowed to navigate freely on the Danube but not to enter the Black Sea. By 1774 with the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca the Porte recognized Russia's rights to the freedom of navigation in Ottoman waters, including the Black Sea, the Danube and the Straits. This was perhaps the most political of capitulations since the privileges were granted as a result of a treaty; their unilateral character stemming from an imperial edict was negated. In addition, the establishment of consulates in sensitive areas like Wallachia and Moldavia led to tension. The Porte's capitulatory agreements with Western powers acquired a new character, as they reacted strongly to the opening of the Black Sea to the Russian ships.

Europeans exploited the privileges and brought the Empire to a position of economic and political subordination. Although the Ottoman Empire had previously been powerful enough to prevent abuses, the European states now applied pressure on the weakened Ottoman state to maintain and extend the concessions. The abuse consisted of extending the capitulatory rights to the resident subjects of the Porte. By bribing foreign ambassadors and consuls, they succeeded in winning privileges for themselves, such as appointments as dragomans. The capitulations had given the ambassadors and the consuls the right to employ a certain number of dragomans who became exempt from the poll tax and other taxes. These exemptions extended to their sons and servants. The Western nations also obtained various diplomatic immunities for their dragomans. Moreover, they could also extend the privileges to persons who were not their own nationals, so that an Ottoman subject, with the help of an ambassador or consul, could enjoy the privileges usually afforded to foreign-

vening of a separate commission for the discussion of the capitulations. Âli Pasha strongly objected and argued that the Edicts of 1839 and 1856 clearly articulated the rights and privileges of Ottoman Christian subjects. He argued that any decision concerning them would be decided in plenary sessions and not in a special commission. After long arguments, Article 9 was drafted, stating that the Ottoman sultan had already issued an edict that categorically stated there would be no official discrimination based on religion in the Empire. Under this article, the signatories guaranteed they would not interfere in the internal affairs of the Ottoman Empire.

The discussions relating to the Black Sea, the Dardanelles, the Bosphorus and the Danube were much less controversial. Article 10 stated that the Ottoman Empire had the right to prevent the passage of warships through its territorial waters (most specifically the Straits) whenever it deemed such action necessary. Article 14 and Article 19 specified the naval power Russia and the Empire could maintain in the Black Sea, and reducing the number and size of the ships permitted there — in effect, demilitarizing it. Another uncontroversial issue was that of commercial traffic on the Danube. Articles 15 to 20 made commercial traffic on this river free and open to vessels from all nations. They would be free of taxes, except for a

ers. Shortly thereafter, Muslim merchants trading with India and Persia were also granted the same privileges.

Through the capitulations, the European Powers extended their fields of activity and privileges. Important public services, such as shipping and utilities, came to be concentrated in the hands of privileged European companies protected by the threat of military force and political pressure. This caused public opinion to turn violently against the capitulations. By the outbreak of World War I, the Allies had made no promise to abolish them. In 1914, the Sultan proclaimed the abolition of all foreign privileges, but the capitulatory states protested. The Treaty of Sevres restored them and the privileges were extended to the other victorious allies. But with the Treaty of Lausanne (1923) the Allies were finally obliged to accept their complete elimination.

reasonable fee which would be used for the maintenance of safe travel on the river.⁷

Âli Pasha informed the Sultan and the Sublime Porte of the Paris Conference proceedings in a detailed telegraph. Istanbul was jubilant. The Sultan issued a special edict thanking his soldiers and those of the allies for their efforts and sacrifices demonstrated during the war. With the Paris Treaty, Europe, together with the Ottoman Empire, had entered into a new international governance paradigm. It appeared that the Empire was finally free from foreign intervention, there were fewer reasons for internal strife and a freer trade system had been established for the benefit of European powers. Âli Pasha and his collaborators were now ready to dedicate themselves to furthering domestic reforms in the Empire.

⁷ For the complete text of the Paris Treaty see France. Ministère des Affaires Étrangères. *Congrès de Paris*. Paris: Imprimerie Impériale: Avril 1856; Noradounghian, *op. cit.*, Vol. 4.; and Andic & Andic, *Crimea, op.cit.* pp. 47–88 & 129–144.

1861–1876: *LA BELLE ÉPOQUE*

Sultan Abdülmecid died in 1861 and was succeeded by his brother Abdülaziz. The reforms continued, though perhaps not with the same intensity. From the conclusion of the Crimean War until the end of Sultan Abdülaziz's reign in 1876 the Ottoman Empire lived a kind of *la belle époque*. There were no wars with any European power and the European states seemingly fulfilled their aim of maintaining peace and security in Europe. During these years, the Ottomans did face some internal revolts and uprisings that eroded certain clauses of the Paris Treaty. The unification of Wallachia and Moldova (strongly supported by Napoleon III), clashes between the Christian Maronites and Muslim Druze in Syria in 1858, uprisings in Jeddah, and Serbian and Greek ambitions to expand their territories under Ottoman suzerainty did create problems for the Empire. Indeed, European powers intervened in each and every one of these internal crises and managed to extract concessions from the Empire.

Those who led the charge for reform, especially Âli Pasha, wanted to bring about drastic changes, especially in the time of Sultan Abdülaziz, but they fell short of their aims. The translation of the penal code from French was completed, but his effort to replace a legal system based on *sharia* with a modern civil code (also to be taken from France) faced serious resistance. In a compromise, a new code of almost 2,000 articles was prepared. It dealt mostly with civil law and became the law of the land for secular and *sharia* courts, though it excluded family law.

The problem of the empire's finances remained a major issue seemingly immune to reform. In order to finance the Crimean War, the Empire had borrowed from French and British banks, even though the war arrived with the Ottomans already dealing with perennial budget deficits due to previous wars and internal strife. Sultan Abdülmecid continued to borrow from abroad not for pro-

ductive investments in trade and agriculture, but to finance the luxury of his court. There was no appreciable change in the revenue structure of the Empire as expenditure rose, revenues stagnated and — year after year — the budget deficit was covered by borrowing. Finally, a financial meltdown created panic in the early years of Sultan Abdülaziz's reign. The Grand Vizier of the time, Fuad Pasha, hoped to solve the financial crisis with three inter-related measures. First, paper money was issued that, theoretically, held value at parity with gold. However, the paper money was not numbered and quantities were not known. Parity with gold (and, therefore, value) began to erode almost immediately. Second, short-term borrowing from domestic banks would occur in addition to the larger loans taken out from foreign banks, the third measure involved additional borrowing from European banks. Since borrowing internally and externally carried high rates of interest, debt compounded and because the paper money carried no denominations of value, counterfeiting became a serious problem that undermined the currency. The financial panic deepened. To withdraw the paper money from circulation, it was exchanged with gold piasters at a rate of 40 % of the value of paper money. The difference was paid with government bonds, adding additional debt to the treasury. These dire conditions forced the government to reduce its expenditures. Salaries were reduced, import duties increased, new taxes on tobacco and salt were introduced, stamp duties were instituted and, yielding to European pressure, revenues were earmarked to service foreign debt. These remedies eliminated the panic, but the Empire was never able to free itself from foreign debt. The dearth of government revenue became a perennial problem until the last days of the Empire.

The reign of Abdülaziz was dominated by Âli Pasha and Fuad Pasha. Both were firm believers in the absolute monarchy, but they also strove to control the autocratic administration of the Sultan, forcing him to act within the limits of the law. Both served as Grand Vizier, as well as minister of foreign affairs, and both spent inordinate amounts of time and effort to block European intervention in the internal affairs of the Empire. Both toiled incessantly to bring about social and political development, but their efforts usually fell short of their aims. Fuad Pasha died in 1869 and Âli Pasha in 1871. Those who took the helm after them became "yes men"

instead of leading the Sultan in the direction of reform. The era of *Tanzimat* was approaching its end.

A new concept began to flourish in the Ottoman Empire: to replace the present system with a constitutional monarchy. Initiated and directed mostly by self-exiled Ottomans living in London and Paris, the idea of introducing constitutional law into the Ottoman system was held up as a potential panacea to all that ailed the Empire. These expatriate intellectuals propagated the belief that were there to be a constitutional system in place, the Empire would free itself from its perennial problems and difficulties.

TANZİMAT AND THE LEGACY OF ÂLİ PASHA

Âli Pasha was one of the most capable statesmen ever to hold top administrative positions in the Ottoman Empire, and indeed to hold these posts at the most crucial of times. While to a large degree self-made, this man was also the product of an important organization in the Ottoman system: the Translation Bureau. A brief explanation of this office is offered below.

The Translation Bureau was instituted by Sultan Mahmud II. The interplay between those who graduated from the Translation Bureau and the proclamation of the 1839 *Tanzîmat*, and the events and reforms that followed, is fascinating and illuminating in many respects. The Ottomans conducted their foreign affairs in their own language. Turkish was, in fact, the *lingua franca* of the eastern Mediterranean and throughout the Middle East. European embassies in Istanbul communicated with the Sultan's government through dragomans, who were usually local Christians. In the eighteenth century, the dragomans were selected from a small group of Greek families. However, in 1821, during the Greek revolution, the last Greek dragoman was dismissed and later executed for abusing his post and committing treason against the state. The need to educate Muslims as diplomats who could converse in foreign languages led to the creation of the Translation Bureau at the Sublime Porte. Had the *Tanzîmat* proclamation never been issued, this Bureau might have remained one amongst many branches of Ottoman bureaucracy. However, struggling for survival in a world where imperialist designs aimed to dismember it, the Ottoman Empire required statesmen familiar with Europe, its languages and its affairs. This new diplomatic elite could not come from the army because Sultan Mahmud II, in the period before *Tanzîmat*, had eradicated the centuries-old Janissary organization and replaced it with a new military system. This new and fledgling system was not

capable of supplying the government with men of the required caliber. The religious class, by definition, was opposed to all changes that involved Westernization and therefore would not provide new, Western-oriented Ottoman statesmen. Almost by default, the new elite came from the Translation Bureau. The architects of the reforms of the Empire that began in 1839 — Mustafa Reşit Pasha, Fuad Pasha and Âli Pasha — were all graduates of the Translation Bureau. In fact, by virtue of being an employee of the Bureau, Âli's fate was sealed. For, as much as he was the maker of reforms, the reforms that started within the Translation Bureau also made Âli.

MEMORANDUM FROM CRETE

Âli Pasha was not only a capable statesman within the bureaucracy, but was also a keen observer and political analyst. On more than one occasion he did not shy away from telling his sovereign the unvarnished truth. One such case involves a memorandum he transmitted to Sultan Abdülaziz from Crete where he was sent as the Sultan's emissary to find solutions to a serious uprising against the Empire. The memorandum carries the date of October, 30, 1867.¹ He wrote:

"The general state of the world and changes in the European states threaten our Empire. The intrigues of Russia have never been as many as they are today. Although these intrigues clashed with the interests of other rival states, particularly France and Great Britain, during the Crimean War, Russia... has sought different ways to ignore the articles of the Paris Treaty... and is meddling in our internal affairs, especially in Romania, Serbia, Montenegro, Syria and Crete... propagating the idea that no nation should, against its will, be dominated by another nation... It is well known, that since the time of Peter the Great, Russia has carried out policies that are contrary to

¹ For some inexplicable reason, this memorandum is ignored by Ottoman writers. It is cited by Andreas David Mordtmann in *Istanbul and the New Ottomans (Istanbul ve Yeni Osmanlılar*, translation of *Stamboul und das moderne Türkenthum*. Leipzig: Verlag von Duncker & Humblot, 1877). Istanbul: Pera Yayıncılık, 1999, pp. 50–65.

the interests of our Empire... We have virtually no allies against the Russian danger. We have to maintain a large army and spend a large portion of state revenues on military expenditures. We have no funds to invest in the economic development of our country and we have no time to carry out further reforms. These conditions create favorable circumstances for our enemies, but also are onerous for our Muslim population because only Muslim citizens are subject to military service... When dangers knock on our door, we take some short-term palliative measures, but in order to save the Empire we need long-term measures and must cease relying on temporary solutions. At the moment our Empire is not capable of permanently eliminating discontent in our provinces, nor can it resist successfully the intervention of foreign states that is shrouded in their excuse of protecting our Christian subjects... It is my duty, as your obedient servant, to bring to your attention a number of issues. As is well known, the happiness of human beings depends upon the expectations they harbor. Be they rich or poor, everyone desires their expectations be realized. Therefore, the duty of the state is to prevent the dangers that surge from hopes dashed and unmet. Today, the European states are wealthy and powerful, so it is their obligation to fight rebellion and maintain peace.

"...The prevailing opinion today is that all people are free and equal. Everyone has the right to freedom of speech without discrimination based on religion or race and everyone should have the same opportunity to achieve according to their knowledge and capabilities. In Europe today, no one is categorized as Catholic, Protestant, Jewish or Atheist, whereas with us, non-Muslim subjects send their children off to be educated, yet we abstain from employing them... They repeat time and again, 'we are also subjects of this country, but since we are not Muslims, we are burdened with duties, obligations and taxes and treated as second class citizens.' Our government should take the initiative to eliminate such grievances and free them from the harmful propaganda of foreign states. Non-Muslim subjects should not feel they are under the yoke of a Muslim state; rather they should feel they are subjects of a state that protects them equally."

Âli Pasha also introduced a mechanism to bring about this equality, emphasizing the inadequacy of the education system and how to correct it:

"It is evident that until now we have neglected education. To come to the same level as the civilized world, drastic measures are required. Any Muslim Turk who wishes to be employed by the government must master Turkish. The same rule also must be applied to non-Muslims. It is imperative that Muslim and non-Muslim children study together in schools ... throughout the land."

Âli Pasha recommended reform of the civil courts:

"Another important complaint in the land is in reference to the courts. It would be wise to issue a civil code, as was done in Egypt, and civil disputes should be processed in mixed courts. Neither the civil code nor the mixed courts are contrary to sharia."

"In short, all matters, except religious affairs, should be integrated and jealousy between religious groups should be eliminated. This is the only way to minimize the dangers we face."

This insightful memorandum clearly demonstrates Âli Pasha's diagnosis of the many ills plaguing the Empire, as well as his prescriptions. It is a pity he was alone in his views and that neither the Sultan nor other statesmen collaborated with him or carried out his recommendations after his death.

THE POLITICAL TESTAMENT

The Political Testament was addressed directly to Sultan Abdülaziz. In the *Testament*, the Grand Vizier first summarized the political development of Europe, its relationship to the Ottoman Empire and the achievements of the reforms executed in the Empire since 1839. The purpose of this *Testament* was, as Âli Pasha stated, "...To submit to Your Majesty the program I deemed to follow." He described this program as follows:

"To lay the foundation of the program Your Majesty's Government will have to implement, we will trace the general features that are of interest to us... But let us be aware: all good features can vanish if measures to raise general prosperity are

not implemented with care. Corrupt and self-interested people must no longer secure for their interests policies from Your Majesty's Government that are detrimental to the country. Your Majesty's Government does not act arbitrarily. It knows and asserts its rights and strives to implement fair measures. It knows the weaknesses, the rights, the power, the customs and even the inclinations of its friends and enemies better than they themselves. Their history, geography, topography, industry and trade are no secret. The study of the constitutions of foreign countries enables one to anticipate their policies and actions. The government, in conformity with the esteemed opinion of Your Majesty and having assured the integrity of Your Empire, advances perhaps slowly but surely on the road to progress."

Âli Pasha's conception of government was one of good governance for all its people. He clearly identified the precepts of such governance:

"We geared our efforts to strengthening the system of government and its weak administration. We created a new organization. We battled against favoritism with all our might. Your Majesty's Edict [referring to the Edict of 1856] made it clear to officials they are not in the service of particular individuals and they form part of an administration, not a party. We did not dismiss any one, except in cases of notorious incompetence. We opposed the firing of a subordinate merely to fill that post with the protégé of the head of an administration. We recognized the deplorable consequences of the previous system. These were: disorganization and interruptions of work within various administrative branches resulting from the constant turnover of personnel, demoralized officials evading their duties because of the uncertainty of their future and the perception of officials that their remuneration depended on the influence of their protectors. To avoid the misery to which they could be condemned by an intriguing personal enemy, they wasted their time and neglected their work. We prohibited administrative chiefs from using their influence in hiring staff who, however qualified, would be serving only them. We ourselves set the example. The numerous regulations we prepared are our witnesses. [But] We did not always have competent

staff and were forced to appoint individuals who were incapable to understand them.”

It is self-evident that good governance requires a well-staffed and competent civil service. Turning his attention to the requirements of good civil service, Âli Pasha continued:

“We have improved the situation gradually, with difficulty, and unfortunately incompletely... Part of the blame, however, lies in our system of government, where bureaucracy is deficient. Moreover, there are no training programs. Any person can scheme his way into the post of Grand Vizier without having to rise through the hierarchy... With a stroke of luck, a sleeping secretary can sometimes wake up as Grand Vizier. Our actions would be viewed more leniently if one considers we were obliged to moderate the detrimental effects of conceit, a common characteristic even among virtuous individuals. Having attained a certain rank, the single obsession of an official becomes to reach an even higher post and decide the fate of the country, even if he knows he does not have the required capacity and knowledge. All ambition, however unfounded, becomes attainable through intrigue; hence it is a clear danger...”

Âli Pasha was a firm believer in the need for a programmatic approach to the administration of the government:

“We insist on cautioning Your Majesty, kind and indulgent as You are, to resist and reject all intrigue... We will not conceal from You, Sire, that after having held for a long time the office You have entrusted us with, it would grieve us to see it occupied by a successor who is devoid of prudence and wisdom, misunderstands our work and decides to depart from the policy course we have followed. Those who abuse the extreme generosity of Your Majesty and conceal the real state, in which the country finds itself, will lead You to undertake policies that will bankrupt the Treasury and lead the Empire to ruin. Your Majesty has already been advised of the inconvenience of entrusting the functions of a Grand Vizier to new hands. A new Grand Vizier should be appointed only by the need to strengthen the administration. A program must be submitted to Your Majesty, and the Grand Vizier, assisted by the ministers in charge of its drafting and its execution, must adhere to

it rigorously. Responsibilities will have to be well defined and the spheres of action delineated."

Âli Pasha believed more efficient administration required the reorganization of the council of ministers and the clear delineation of their duties and privileges:

"Under the present regime, the Grand Vizier himself is intricately involved with issues that are the purview of the different ministries. He alone assumes all responsibility. But, unbeknownst to his ministers, he may take decisions contrary to the interests of the state and have Your Majesty sanction them without informing Him whether the council approved them or not...It should be ensured that the person in whom Your Majesty will place His confidence occupy this honorable post as long as he follows the path of duty and public interest."

Âli Pasha called attention to the compensation of civil servants, as they formed the backbone of any administration.

"A vast majority of civil servants, most of whom are dedicated, are poorly paid. Only those that plead with and flatter higher ranking authorities receive pay rises. As a result, skilled and talented men shun public service and look for more honorable and lucrative means of livelihood. The government is then forced to recruit mediocre personnel whose sole aim is to improve their weak fiscal situation at the expense of the public sector. We have no doubt the government seeks to raise the economic standard and the morale of its personnel."

"To ensure fair payment and promotion, regulations governing the civil service must be codified. Public employees should not be shifted constantly from post to post, especially those in the provinces. Anyone who faces the danger of losing his post, when he has hardly begun it, will carry out his duties half-heartedly. Whatever their rank, an employee must assume his share of responsibility and receive his share of recompense."

As expected, Âli Pasha's counsel did not focus solely on government organization, but also on government finances. His analysis was colored by his own experience with perennial budget deficits, expenditures incurred just to quash rebellions or wage wars and continuously increasing foreign debt. He also tackled the problem

of taxes, noting the contradiction between lengthy (and expensive) military service and a narrow tax base. The Ottoman Empire was essentially an agricultural country where the productive force was the peasants, yet inordinately long, obligatory military service fell mostly on the Muslim agrarian population, since non-Muslims were exempt. Thus, the men providing the primary taxable economic activity were also the primary source of manpower for the state:

"The revenue problem is crucial to Your Majesty's Government and requires an urgent solution. It is only fair that the wealthy, generally urban population, pay a much larger portion of taxes and levies, so that the burden of the rural population, who is already overburdened with tithes, can be alleviated. The rural population has very limited resources to improve their condition. Their labor is necessary but painful. The townsman, in contrast, can enrich himself rapidly and enjoy an easy and pleasant life... [T]he blood tax falls only on the Muslims. As a result, the Muslim population is declining at an alarming rate and will soon become a small and weakened minority. What can be expected if a man is taken from his village in the prime of his life and is forced to spend seven to ten years in the barracks?"

Âli Pasha was referring to the problem of inordinately long military service causing a decline in agricultural production and, therefore, reducing tax revenues, while at the same time raising expenditures and increasing the budget deficit. He continued:

"To extract from the poor peasant half of his meager earnings of three to four thousand piasters via direct and indirect taxation is to condemn him to misery. To take from the wealthy and opulent urban dweller half of his income of one hundred thousand piasters still leaves him with sufficient affluence."

It is interesting to note that Âli Pasha called for what is generally accepted in public finance today: progressive taxation according to the ability of the taxpayer to pay:

"A sound, moderate approach would sustain the society's well-being. Taxpayers will be encouraged to acquire new resources if they are not pressured and frightened. The collection system

we propose is the best for us, especially since we lack competent and honest tax collectors.”

“The collection of various taxes be farmed out to reputable firms contracted on a long-term basis but reviewed every five years...and carefully selected Ministry of Finance officials should monitor the progress of revenues collection. Know-how and wisdom are just as indispensable as honesty and trust. We believe this collection method to be suitable for any government, even for the best administrations staffed with the best and most dedicated personnel. However loyal and competent the personnel may be, they cannot serve the interests of the government as well as those of the private sector serves its interests. Civil servants are not remunerated in accordance with growing prosperity; hence, they have no interest to increase it. They manage and execute too many functions and are overworked to be able to oversee even a single public service. This is not the case in a well-organized, profit-seeking private company, whose managers receive bonuses that rise with profits. As shareholders in their companies, directors have all the interest to see to it that the fruits of the capital invested continue to multiply.”

It is important to note that Âli Pasha was a firm believer in openness and transparency in order to assure good governance. Considering that the *Testament* was written during the late nineteenth century in a country governed by an absolute monarchy, his views about the freedom of the press are surprising indeed. He forcefully asserted:

“The freedom of the press is a threat only to those governments not willing to correct their deficiencies. Such freedom should be welcomed by a government that aims for the best. To oppress thought is to force people towards devious ways, which they will find without fail. Oppression only encourages conspiracy and mutiny. It leads to violence and jeopardizes the security of the state. The freedom of the press is a powerful aide for the government in its fight against evil and in its protection of the good.”

“One should not act with haste. For the moment, one should be satisfied by doing away with the existing impediments to

give the press the growth it merits. The government should establish a great newspaper to respond to articles that appear in the local or foreign press, to defend the true interests of the government and of the country, to publish the laws, regulations and ordinances, comment upon them, and to inform the public of the measures taken by the government and its motives. This will disarm hostility. This newspaper should avoid flattery, which vexes the public more than the truth itself, however harsh it may be. Truth and sincerity should be its motto."

"Under the present regime the press is but a weak link between the government and Ottoman subjects, especially those in the provinces who do not know what 'public interest' means. Self-interest is their only concern. To forge this link and to make the government accessible to its subjects, we propose the press and all written work be granted the widest freedom possible. As a result, the press will deal with political issues, will pass judgment on the actions of the government and signal the country's needs. This will facilitate the tasks of the commissioners whose appointment we have proposed. The press could in the meantime act as a substitute for national representation, since it will be read daily and inform the people. If the assembly in charge of debating and overseeing public affairs were made up of uninformed residents, it could quickly become a lamentably impotent instrument."

The *Testament* dealt not only with governance and public sector reform. Âli Pasha also advanced counsels to the Sultan on necessary reforms to the private sector. These included the expansion of access to credit, incentives to industry and trade and improvements to transportation and communication. It is important to note that Âli Pasha was very much in favor of privatization as he had observed the inefficiency and corruption inherent in state enterprises and emphasized how in private hands such firms would be more efficient and more conducive to development. His policy suggestions were akin to those examined in the development studies textbooks of recent decades.

There is no historical evidence to determine whether Sultan Abdülaziz ever read the *Testament*. Nor is there any indication it was even transmitted to him. It is only known to have become public

knowledge when it was published in France.² It is bewildering that neither Ottoman-Turkish nor foreign historians have ever paid the *Testament* the attention it deserves. Their reference is either limited to mentioning its existence or to engage in a fruitless discussion as to whether or not Âli Pasha in fact penned it.³

The full text of the *Testament* was first published in English in Istanbul in 1996 and then in Turkish in 2000.⁴

² Âli Pasha, "Testament Politique," *La Revue de Paris*, Vol. 17, no. 7, April 1910, pp. 505–524, and Vol. 17, no. 9, May 1910, pp. 105–124.

³ According to Davison, it is likely that it was penned by Âli Pasha, and according to the Turkish essayist Cemil Meriç, the authorship is not disputed. See Davison, *Reform*, *op. cit.*, pp. 415–418 and Cemil Meriç, *From Prosperity to Civilization (Umrandan Uygarlığa)*. Istanbul: Ötüken Yayınevi, 1974, pp. 28–38.

⁴ Andic & Andic, *The Last ...*, *op.cit.*, pp. 32–61 and Andic & Andic, *Âli Pasha*, .. *op.cit.*, pp. 59–138.



Figure 8: Abdülhamid II

ABDÜLHAMID II

Accused of refusing to accept a constitutional monarchy, Sultan Abdülaziz was deposed on April 27, 1876, after a reign of fifteen years. Two high ranking officers, Hüseyin Avni Pasha, the Minister of War and the Director of the Military Academy, and Mithat Pasha, enlisted the students of the Military Academy to engineer a *coup d'état*. Despite all the efforts of the late Sultan Mahmud II, the military continued to meddle in government affairs. Sultan Abdülaziz was succeeded by his brother, Murad V, whose reign lasted only ninety-three days. Suspected of mental imbalance, he too was dethroned in a military coup and, on August 31, 1876, the grandson of Mahmud II (the son of Sultan Abdülmecid) ascended to the throne as Abdülhamid II after giving his word of honor that he would declare a constitution.

Only two months after his ascension, another Ottoman-Serbian war began. As expected, Russia put pressure on the Ottoman government and forced its army to retreat. Just as the Ottoman army retreated from Serbia, the possibility of war with Austria began to loom and the German Chancellor Otto Von Bismarck devised a plan to carve up the Ottoman Empire. Austria would be given Bosnia-Sarajevo, Russia southern Bessarabia, France Syria and Britain Egypt. The British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli objected vehemently as the plan was contrary to the interests of Britain and he suggested a conference be held in Istanbul with the European powers and the Ottoman Empire to discuss the Empire's future. The then Prime Minister (*Sadrâzam*) Mithat Pasha convinced the Sultan that if a constitution were proclaimed, it would pre-empt any negative decision the conference might reach. In fact, the conference reached no decision and ceased its activities

in January 1877. The constitution had been declared in December 1876.

The constitution of 1876 was the first step toward altering the governance paradigm in the Empire. Composed of 119 articles,¹ the law defined the duties and privileges of the Sultan and reiterated the mode of succession to the throne that had been long established: the heir to the throne is the eldest male of the dynasty (Art. 4). The Sultan was given absolute immunity and declared to be sacred as he remained the Caliph, the protector of all Muslims (Arts. 4 and 5). His sovereign rights included appointing the prime minister and other ministers, as well as dismissing them. He could declare war upon the Empire's enemies or make peace with them and was declared the commander-in-chief of both land and sea forces. He was also given the power to dissolve the parliament if he deemed it necessary and could also appoint provincial governors (Art. 7).

The new constitution vested legislative power in a Chamber of Deputies (*Meclis-i Mebusan*) and a Senate (*Meclis-i A'yan*). The members of the Chamber of Deputies would be elected by popular vote and those of the Senate appointed for life by the Sultan.

The constitution declared that administration would be decentralized (Arts. 100, 111), though, as indicated above, provincial governors would be appointed by the Sultan. The constitution also contained a welcome clause, for it made primary education compulsory (Art. 114). Other clauses essentially reiterated the provisions already articulated in the 1839 and 1856 Edicts: guaranteeing personal liberty (Arts. 8, 9, 10) and banning the confiscation of property (Art. 21). Still other clauses govern the functioning of the parliament, the ministries and the local councils.

It should be noted that the theocratic character of the Empire was not altered. The constitution stated that every individual would be free to worship as they chose, but Islam remained the official faith of the Empire (Art. 11).

The Sultan at first rejected the article referring to the freedom of the press, but eventually accepted it. Similarly, Art. 113, which gave the Sultan the right to exile any person he deemed a danger,

¹ See Karal, *op.cit.*, Vol. 8, pp. 220–230.

was initially rejected by the Constitutional Commission but was in the end accepted. It is important to note the state maintained its theocratic character and the Sultan continued to wield vast legislative and executive powers independent of the parliament.

As the constitution had stipulated, the country held elections, although candidates were elected by provincial councils (rather than the general populace) who selected a specified number of deputies who all took their seats in Istanbul. Mithat Pasha was selected as Prime Minister. It seemed that the Ottoman state was entering a new era but the so-called constitutional monarchy did not last very long. In 1877, exploiting uncertainty in Istanbul, Tsarist Russia attacked the Empire to once again realize its centuries-old dream. Its armies marched towards Istanbul and the Straits and quickly occupied three eastern provinces. The war turned quickly against the Empire and the army staggered from defeat to defeat. Rather than uniting to help the Sultan in such an hour of need, the parliament became deadlocked as it searched for scapegoats. The Sultan declared the parliament in *sine die* recess and suspended the constitution. He went on to rule for thirty-three years directly and unilaterally.²

Many history books, mostly written during the early period of the Republic, accuse Sultan Abdülhamid II of being a despot. Foreign historians have also expressed this opinion. But many sultans before Abdülhamid had administered the Empire in an autocratic fashion. Some sultans left the affairs of the state to their Grand Viziers, but they maintained the last word in governance. Abdülhamid also held the reigns of the Empire's administration in his hands and his Grand Viziers were officials who executed his orders. It is difficult to understand this double standard used by historians.

As will be discussed in the next chapter, support for a constitutional monarchy surged during the reign of Abdülmecid and continued during the reign of Abdülaziz. A handful of Ottoman intel-

² According to the archives, Sultan Abdülhamid decided against administering the state with liberal institutions as his father Abdülmecid had done, saying, "I would rather follow the footsteps of my grandfather Sultan Mahmud II." See Shaw & Kural, *op. cit.*, p. 213.

lectuals, originators of the “Young Ottomans” movement in self-exile in Europe (mostly in Paris) demanded a constitution through their writings in papers and periodicals published abroad and smuggled into the Empire. Their argument was short and categorical: the salvation of the Ottoman Empire was in a declared constitution. They never articulated why the salvation of the Empire hinged upon a constitution, or how a constitution would assure such salvation. For them the constitution was a kind of *deus ex machina*. In their newspapers published in various European cities and smuggled to Istanbul they articulated a six-point program that was obscure, abstract and totally devoid of policy proposals.³ In addition, there was no common vision among them. They never attempted to form a political party, be it underground in the Ottoman Empire or based abroad. They never took the trouble to explain to the people why and how the constitution would be the Empire’s savior. Instead, this group of intellectuals and ex-bureaucrats, among them literary individuals such as Namık Kemal and Ziya Pasha, personally attacked Âli Pasha, who maintained that a constitutional government would be a disaster in a culturally, religiously and ethnically diverse country like the Ottoman Empire.⁴ Of course, a constitutional monarchy did come to the Ottoman

³ The short six-point program consisted of the following: (i) all Ottomans are legally equal before the law, (ii) the rights and liberties of all Ottomans are guaranteed, (iii) all Ottomans are free from oppression and deserve eternal and human justice, (iv) all Ottomans are unified with love for their country, (v) to reach all these purposes the absolutist administration will be changed to a constitutional administration and (vi) all these objectives will be reached without violence, only peaceful persuasion is the acceptable method. See Karal, *op. cit.*, Vol. 8, p. 220. See also İlber Ortaylı *The Longest Century of the Empire (İmparatorluğun en Uzun Yüzyılı)*. Istanbul: Timaş Yayınları, 2012, pp. 3–307.

⁴ Both Namık Kemal and Ziya Pasha intensified their personal insults of Âli Pasha by calling him a “syphilitic pimp”. In a satiric poem, Ziya Pasha wrote that “when Âli Pasha dies his corpse should not be buried, but thrown into the gutter.” In the latter years of his reign, a terrorist hurled a bomb at the carriage of Sultan Abdülhamid II. When the Sultan was miraculously saved, another poet wrote a long poem expressing his deep sorrow that he had not died.

Empire, but it was far from rooted in a popular movement; rather it came as a result of a coup by an military-bureaucrat coalition, not once but twice, first in 1876 and, as will be seen below, again in 1908.

It is unknown if Sultan Abdülhamid II read any of the counsels presented to his forefathers. The memoirs of palace officials show he read material in Turkish, Arabic and French. But what he read, and whether he read the counsels is a moot point. At a time when the Russian army had advanced all the way to Ayastafanos (today's Yeşilköy, the site of the Istanbul airport) he had the conviction and courage to assume full responsibility for running the affairs of an Empire that was on the path to decay.

The disastrous war with Russia ended with an agreement that deprived the Ottoman Empire of all its European territory. As expected, such an agreement threw the European powers into panic, for Russia had finally achieved access to the Mediterranean. A hastily arranged Congress in Berlin forced the Russians to revise the Ayastafanos agreement and redrew the borders somewhat in favor of the Empire, giving Sultan Abdülhamid breathing room that allowed him to start his reform efforts.

Reform started with education.⁵ Such reforms in education had been initiated during the time of Sultan Mahmud II and had continued during *Tanzimat*, but yielded very meager results. People were still generally uneducated and local primary schools failed in their provision of basic education, such as history, geography and arithmetic. They succeeded only in teaching literacy and the memorization of Koranic surahs. Mere reform of primary education was insufficient, so a new educational system was set up from grade school to the university level. Primary education was made obligatory and a clause that declared as much was included in the constitution. A Directorate of Education was created to enforce the new

⁵ For details of his education reform see Bayram Kodaman, *The System of Education during the Reign of Abdülhamid (Abdülhamid Devri Eğitim Sistemi)*. Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1991, and Coşkun Yılmaz, ed., *Abdülhamid II, Istanbul during the Modernization Process (II. Abdülhamid, Modernleşme Sürecinde İstanbul)*. Bilingual edition. Istanbul: Avrupa Kültür Başkenti Yayınları, 2010.

system not only in Istanbul, but in all the provinces as well. The construction of schools was accelerated so that by 1908 the number of primary schools in the Empire had risen to 14,000. But it was not enough to simply increase the number of schools and students; qualified teachers were also needed. For that purpose new schools were set up in a number of provinces to train teachers. Junior high schools created during the *Tanzimat* fell short and in 1876 their numbers were only 423 with a student body of 20,000. By 1909, the last year of Sultan Abdülhamid's reign, the number of such schools had risen to 619 with a student body of 40,000. Similar developments also took place with respect to senior high schools, whose number rose to 109 in 1909, with a student body of 20,000.

Higher education reforms — part of Abdülhamid's plan to fight ignorance — started in 1882, when a university was established in Istanbul. Several additional schools of higher education were also set up to complement the university, including schools of public administration, medicine, law and veterinary science. To further the knowledge of War College graduates a specialized Staff College was also established. Learning French, then the *lingua franca* of the civilized world, also became obligatory, starting in the middle schools.

Abdülhamid was equally preoccupied with public health. Periodic outbreaks of typhoid fever, malaria and other diseases had plagued Ottoman subjects from time immemorial. Together with the School of Medicine, several hospitals were constructed for use by both civilians and the military. Vaccination against smallpox became obligatory and the Red Crescent (a counterpart to the Red Cross) was also established. A shortage of potable water in the capital and provincial cities remained a serious problem, so fountains were built in nearly every neighborhood, especially in Istanbul, to provide free access to water for the people.

An intensive campaign to establish a telegraph network connecting the capital with all the major provincial cities was completed with surprising speed. But the Ottoman Empire remained an empire without adequate transportation networks. The state did not have sufficient financial means or the technical knowledge to build railways. Sultan Abdülhamid contracted European firms for the construction of railroads and succeeded in increasing the Empire's rail network. During his reign almost 6,000 kilometers of rail

were laid and a parallel network of highways was also constructed. Between 1881 and 1897 the average yearly highway construction amounted to some 800 kilometers.

There were also developments in the economy and finance, but these were not as successful as the improvements in education and communication. An independent Public Audit Department was set up in order to control the accounts of the ministries and, for the first time, a single budget was prepared. Several incentives were granted to increase and improve the production of textiles and a bank was set up with the purpose of extending credit to the agricultural sector.

The reign of Sultan Abdülhamid lasted thirty-three years from 1876 to 1909 and yet his was the most consequential reign of any Ottoman sultan of the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, from the end of his reign to the demise of the Ottoman Empire, and during the early years of the Turkish Republic, Sultan Abdülhamid was ruthlessly criticized as a despot who spent thirty years undermining the Empire's constitutional reforms. Indeed, his name became synonymous with "autocrat". However, it isn't clear that a truly constitutional system would have produced better governance in the Ottoman Empire. After all, it was a country of tremendous religious, cultural and ethnic diversity that was constantly subjected to the imperial designs of Europe. At the time of Sultan Abdülhamid, all European countries, with the exception of Britain, were administered by autocratic, centralized systems. With this in mind, had the Young Ottomans and their successors, the Young Turks, truly understood the prevailing circumstances in the Ottoman Empire and in Europe? Did the restoration of the constitution by Young Turks in 1908 save the Empire from demise? Historians of the Ottoman Empire have yet to answer these questions. But one, a dean of Ottoman history, writes, "There is no adequate biography of Abdülhamid or account of his reign. All the European language books on Abdülhamid are biased, inaccurate and mostly useless."⁶

⁶ See Shaw & Kural, *op. cit.*, p. 453.

1908–1918: THE DEMISE OF THE EMPIRE

The last decade of the Ottoman Empire was fraught with internal coups and counter-coups. This period saw three disastrous wars that resulted in the loss of significant Ottoman territories in Africa and the Balkans and the Empire's ultimate demise. Some reforms were also undertaken during this decade, however feeble they were.

THE SECOND CONSTITUTION

A group of young army officers and reform-minded government officials and civilians — the 'Young Turks' — organized a secret society in the Empire's major cities to oppose the regime of Sultan Abdülhamid II. They swore allegiance to the cause of Ottoman renewal, called themselves the Committee of Union and Progress (*İttihat ve Terakki Komitesi* — CUP) and transformed their secret organization into a political party after 1908. Although this new party was founded by civilians and military officers, it was dominated by the army. Several officers belonging to the Committee openly rebelled against the Sultan and a member of the Committee shot and killed one of Sultan Abdülhamid's most trusted generals in Salonika. Abdülhamid, fearing the popular support the military officers were gaining and the possibility of large scale rebellion, restored the parliament by calling an election and reinstated the constitution of 1876. As a result, the CUP emerged as a new and dominant force in Ottoman politics and its ascendancy continued until 1918.¹

¹ For the history of the CUP see Tarkan Zafer Tunaya, *Political Parties in Turkey* (*Türkiye'de Siyasal Partiler*. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları), 2000; and Stanford J. Shaw, *From Empire to Republic*. Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2000, Vol. 1, pp. 39–64.

The newly-restored 1876 constitution was modified to restrict the Sultan's power by denying him the ability to select ministers, except the Ministers of War and Navy and the *Sheikbulislâm*. All the other ministers were selected by the parliament and responsible to it.

The newly-formed cabinet started its work by undertaking certain reforms, including the abolition of the privileges given to foreigners and members of the Empire's non-Muslim communities. The reforms drove a surge in Turkish nationalism, as a reaction to the Islamism of Abdülhamid, which continued through the decade and into the Turkish Republic after its formation in 1923.² In response, religious Muslims believed the concept of the "Nation of Islam" inherent in the Ottoman Empire was under attack, so in early 1909 resistance against the policies of the government began. This protest movement crystallized into a political party called Union of Mohammad (*İttihad-ı Muhammedî*). Its newspaper *Volcano* (*Volkan*), under the direction of religious authorities, advocated open rebellion and, as a counter to growing Turkish nationalism, religious conservatism gained in popularity. Whether Sultan Abdülhamid supported this new political party and shared the opinions expressed in *Volcano* is not known, but the Sultan's guards did participate in a revolt in Istanbul and led deadly attacks against officers and known members of CUP. Until this rebellion the CUP had remained low key and kept its headquarters in Salonika, but to respond to the rebellion it organized a small force, the Army of Deliverance (*Hareket Ordusu*), under the command of Mahmut Şevket Pasha and with Mustafa Kemal (later known as Atatürk) as the chief of staff. The Army of Deliverance marched from Rumelia to Istanbul and quashed the rebellion, and the parliament met and voted to depose Sultan Abdülhamid. Since Article 7 of the constitution had not been changed, no guilt could be attributed to the Sultan but a delegation of four parliamentarians went to the palace to inform him of their vote. Instead of addressing him as Your Im-

² Sultan Abdülhamid was a devout Muslim, however his personal faith alone does not explain this policy. He strove to keep the Empire intact and his policy was directed at maintaining the allegiance of the Arab provinces to the Empire.

perial Majesty they simply said “the nation does not want you,” using the word “you” in its familiar second person singular form.³ On April 29, 1909, Sultan Abdülhamid was put on the imperial train and sent to internal exile in Salonika.⁴ His brother Reşat succeeded him as Mehmed V.

The parliament passed several bills to continue their reform agenda: the slave trade was abolished, rules governing the censorship of the press were changed, public meetings were restricted, military conscription of non-Muslims was permitted and strikes were banned.

For some time the CUP operated entirely behind the scenes, though it partially surfaced when Mahmud Şevket Pasha was appointed Grand Vizier, for it had neither the majority in the parliament nor a majority of cabinet posts. However, his cabinet had two very important ministers: the Minister of Finance, Cavit Bey and a long standing member of CUP from its early days, and the Minister of Interior, Talât Pasha.⁵

Initially, people were euphoric at the restoration of the second constitution and two names became household words: Enver and Niyazi. These two young officers participated in the army of Rumeilia that defied Sultan Abdülhamid. They left their units and began to wage guerrilla warfare. For days the streets echoed with shouts of “Long live the constitution! Long live Niyazi! Long live Enver!” There was little indication that within a few years Enver, at the rank of pasha, would become a virtual dictator of the Ottoman Empire.⁶

³ Selim Deringil, *The Well-protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876–1909*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999, p. 173.

⁴ He lived there until 1912. He was brought back to Istanbul during the Ottoman-Balkan War, but remained under house arrest in the Beylerbeyi Palace, where he died in 1917.

⁵ In the Ottoman government, the post of Minister of Interior was the second most important after the Grand Vizier, since all civil administrative posts, starting with provincial governors, were under his command.

⁶ Enver Pasha was born İsmail Enver in Istanbul in November 1881. He was educated at the Military Academy and the Staff College and was sent to the Third Army in Salonika with the rank of major. He became a member of CUP and had a short role in the suppression of the

WARS

In order to prove its stature amongst the other European powers, Italy set out to gain control of its own colonies. To accomplish this Italy declared war on the Ottoman Empire on September 29, 1911 and on October 3 launched an invasion of Libya, one of the North African provinces of the Ottoman Empire. A squadron of Italian

counter-coup in Istanbul and thereafter was sent to Berlin as military attaché where he developed a great admiration for the militaristic culture of Germany. He left Berlin in 1911, when the Ottoman-Italian war started, and assumed the overall command of Turkish forces in Libya. He returned to Istanbul during the first Balkan War (1912). The disastrous result of the war gave him the chance to organize a coup in January 1913 and he became Minister of War after liberating Adrianopolis (today's Edirne) from the Bulgarians. He also became a member of the royal family by marrying a princess of the Ottoman family. Thanks to this connection, his position in CUP and his reputation within the army his power grew steadily, and his rank rose. At the beginning of the First World War he signed a secret agreement with Germany (in collaboration and cooperation with Talât Pasha, Minister of War, and Sait Halim Pasha, the Grand Vizier) without the knowledge of the cabinet or the parliament. He commanded the Third Army that faced Russian forces in Eastern Anatolia. At the battle of Sankamış, which started in December 1914 and ended in January 1915, his army was almost totally obliterated. The Ottoman army fought courageously on several fronts, but in 1918, Austria-Hungary and Bulgaria, the allies of Germany, were left with no alternative but to seek an armistice. The Ottoman Empire also signed the armistice together with its allies. The CUP government collapsed but Enver and a number of his colleagues escaped from Istanbul with a German submarine. Enver took refuge in the Soviet Union but his honeymoon with the Soviets was short-lived and lasted until the end of 1921 when he took a position against the Soviets when Lenin sent him to Bukhara to suppress an uprising in Turkestan. There he changed his position and, with the aim of creating a Muslim Caliphate, he joined forces with the Basmadjis. He died on August 4, 1922, during a battle that raged between the Basmadjis and the Soviet forces. The best book about Enver Pasha is by Şevket Süreyya Aydemir, *Enver Pasha (Enver Paşa)*, Istanbul: Remzi Kitabevi. 3 vols., 1970, 1971, and 1972. These volumes do not only narrate his life to the minutest detail, but also tell the story of the Ottoman Empire and its struggle for survival during the years immediately preceding the second constitution, the war in Libya, the Balkan wars and World War I.

warships moored in Tripoli's harbor and bombarded the city. The great powers of Europe supported Italy for varying reasons: Russia because it expected Italy would support their designs on the Straits and France and Britain supported Italy because they believed Italy's complaint about the ill treatment of its subjects in Libya. This was a flimsy accusation and there are no sources in any language to support this allegation.⁷ The Empire sent its best military personnel to counterattack the invasion, among them were Enver Pasha and Mustafa Kemal (later Atatürk). The Ottoman officers and their forces pinned the Italian forces on a coastal strip, but the Ottoman forces in Libya required additional ordinance and manpower to complete their task. In order to increase the pressure and force the Ottomans to a settlement Italy also occupied the Dodecanese Islands in the Aegean Sea and on October 12 the Ottoman Empire ceded Libya to the Italians but regained its Aegean Islands.

As the war with Italy was coming to a conclusion another war had already started, and the Ottoman government needed all personnel and munitions it could muster to defend its homeland. A coalition including Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia and Montenegro launched a war against the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans in October 1912 when Montenegro attacked the Ottoman province of Albania. Soon thereafter, Greeks attacked first the Aegean Islands and then Turkish forces in Macedonia. The Ottoman army collapsed for myriad reasons, including a lack of ammunition, inadequate food supply, a lack of a capable fighting force and mismanagement during battle. Whatever the reason, the enemy was once again at the gate of Istanbul, and Edirne, the second capital of the Ottoman Empire until the time of Mehmed the Conqueror, was occupied by Bulgarian forces. While some European powers such as France and Britain stood by as spectators, Russia actively encouraged its Slav-Orthodox brothers. The invading forces pillaged Turkish villages and massacred men, women and children in a campaign of ethnic cleansing not witnessed until then.⁸ The Em-

⁷ See Commodore Henry Beehler Mehler, *The History of the Italian-Turkish War*. Forgotten Books, 1913, p. 6.

⁸ In addition to the casualties caused by the ethnic cleansing of the Muslims in the Balkans, Ottoman forces incurred casualties exceeding

pire had no other recourse but to sue for peace. However, disagreement amongst the Balkan states about the spoils of war provided an opportunity to the Ottomans. Seeking to keep western Thrace in their respective boundaries, Greece and Bulgaria went to war. The CUP seized this opportunity and Enver Pasha forced his way into the Grand Vizier's office and, in the midst of cabinet meeting, the Minister of War was shot dead, other ministers were wounded and the Grand Vizier resigned. Enver Pasha went on to recover Edirne and became the Minister of War in a new cabinet composed solely of CUP members. He also became chief of staff and vice-commander of all Ottoman forces (the Sultan is the *de jure* commander-in-chief) and came to be known as "the conqueror of Edirne." Merely a major in 1908, he had become the virtual dictator of the Ottoman Empire in five years.⁹

MODERNIZATION AND REFORMS

The CUP emphasized Turkish nationalism as opposed to Islamism during the reign of Abdülhamid II. Unlike the Young Ottomans, Young Turks did not follow *sharia* as they were secularist, even atheist, and *sharia* had no place in their thinking.¹⁰ To improve the Empire's precarious situation required modernization and the drive for modernization and its intellectual basis came from the CUP leadership.¹¹

100,000 men, and the combined losses of dead and wounded for the Balkan allies was estimated to be 212,000 during the first stage of the Balkan wars alone. See Richard C. Hall, *The Balkan Wars 1912–1913: Prelude to the First World War*. New York: 2000, p. 35.

⁹ See Shaw, *From the Empire ...*, *op.cit.*, pp.39–47 and *History ...*, *op.cit.*, pp. 287–305; and Charles Emmerson, *1913: In Search of the World before the Great War*. London: Public Affairs, 2013, pp. 374–380.

¹⁰ Shaw & Kural, *op. cit.*, p. 204. To call some Young Turks 'atheist' is an exaggeration. Even a poet like Tevfik Fikret, who was a semi-official poet laureate of the Young Turks and is also known for his free thinking, never professed to be atheist.

¹¹ Among the leaders, the sociologist Ziya Gökalp (1876–1924) distinguished himself as a theoretician of the CUP. He was a professor at the University of Istanbul and wrote numerous poems exalting Turks and Turkism.

The CUP enjoyed no period of stability to tackle the reform issue until 1913 as continuous wars prevented the party leadership from undertaking reforms. The Financial Reform Commission started with the perennial problem of budget deficits and reviewed and reformed the tax system. Measures were taken to reduce the tax burden on the rural population and a type of income tax was introduced to fund municipal governments. The provincial administration law of 1913 strengthened the governance of the provinces and reorganized. The police were also reorganized and made part of the civil administration.

The legal system was freed partially from *sharia* with a new code called *Mecelle*. A new law was also enacted to establish the Appeals Court (*mahkeme-i temyiz*), which was the ultimate authority to revise the decisions of lower courts and issued final judgments.

Two very important reforms are worth noting. In April 1916, while World War I raged on, the post of the *Sheikhulislām* was downgraded from a ministerial level to a department, and the Ministry of Religious Foundations was abolished and its functions were transferred to the Ministry of Justice. A family law was also promulgated that was freed from the straitjacket of *sharia*. It liberated women, hitherto thought inconceivable, and provided them equal rights, gave them the right to hold property, to divorce their husbands for cause and secured their access to education and employment without requiring their husbands' permission. These were the very first steps towards secularism.

Last but not least, the reform of the military was perhaps the most important. The CUP and its Minister of War, Enver Pasha, an admirer of the German war machine, sought German help to modernize the army after the Prussian style.¹² There already was understanding between the two empires. During the reign of Abdülhamid II, German capital was invested in the Ottoman Empire, especially in railroad construction, and the Germans obtained several concessions from the Ottomans. Echoing Abdülhamid's Islamist policy, Kaiser Wilhelm II had put himself forward as the protector

¹² See İlber Ortaylı, *The German Influence on the Ottoman Empire (Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Alman nüfuzu)*. Istanbul: Alkım Yayınevi, 2006. 9th printing, pp. 89–106.

of all Muslims since the 1880s and visited the Ottoman Empire twice, with great pomp and circumstance. His policy gathered support and sympathy from within the Empire, but it also worked to Germany's advantage by countering British and French interests, for Britain had a large Muslim minority in India and the population of France's North Africa colonies was almost entirely Muslim. Germany was just as imperialist as the other European powers, but its methods were somewhat different.

While the war darkened the skies of Europe, the Ottoman Empire was in need of an ally. Approaches to Britain and France were rebuffed. Russia, expecting that it would be on the side of the eventual winners, did not even consider such an alliance, hoping the Ottoman Empire would be partitioned at the end of the war. Enver Pasha's admiration of German military might, coupled with the already-existing rapprochement with Germany, left no alternative to the Empire but to enter the war on the side of Germany, Austria and Hungary.¹³ A large number of German military advisors had already joined the Ottoman army. During the war their numbers grew and they ended up directly commanding Turkish regiments, divisions, and army corps.

The Ottoman navy also needed modern battleships. Two were ordered from the dockyards in Britain and while one ship was delivered to the Ottoman navy, the other, on the eve of the First World War, was confiscated by the British government, although it was fully paid for. This infuriated not only the government, but the public as well, since the cost was largely paid by donations from the citizenry. At the start of the war, two German cruisers in the Mediterranean, escaping from the British navy, took refuge in Istanbul. The government, pretended to purchase them with credit from Germany and integrated them into the Ottoman naval force, but they stayed under the command of a German admiral. Without bothering to inform the Turkish high command, the German admiral took them out of the Bosphorus into the Black Sea and bombarded Odessa. This was the *casus belli* in the formal sense.

The intrinsic value of these reforms is certainly laudable; but they were promulgated only a few years before the demise of the

¹³ Ortaylı, *The German... op.cit.*, p. 67.

Ottoman Empire at the end of the First World War. They accomplished little and cannot be judged on whether they would have had long-term impacts had the Empire survived. However, some of them would be inherited by the future Republic.

EPILOGUE

By the end of the thirteenth century a small vassal state on the northwestern tip of the Seljuks, bordering the Byzantine Empire, had metamorphosed into a vast empire that extended from the gates of Vienna in the West to Tabriz in the East and from the Crimea in the North to Sudan in the South. Sultan Selim I, after capturing Egypt in 1517, assumed the title of Caliph, the protector of all Moslems. He and his successors ruled the Empire either directly or indirectly through their Grand Viziers and other ministers. The three pillars of the state, namely the army, civil administration and religious administration, were able to function without interne-cine conflict until the end of the reign of Süleyman the Magnificent (1520–1566), permitting the Empire to expand into Europe, Asia and Africa. In the words of Paul Kennedy:

“During the time of the Empire’s dominance in the sixteenth century the Turks were in most ways the most civilized people in the world. Its cities were large, well lit and drained, and some of them possessed universities and libraries and stunningly beautiful mosques...

The Ottoman Empire was of course much more than a military machine. A conquering elite, the Ottomans established a unity of official faith, culture and language over an area greater than that of the Roman Empire. Yet the Ottoman Turks were to falter, turn inward and lose their chance at domination.”¹

Three things worked against the Ottomans: a sense of superiority and a false sense of security, ignorance of European developments

¹ Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*. New York: Random House, 1987, pp. 10–11.

and the withdrawal of the Sultans from the direct rule of state affairs. Meanwhile, a number of drastic developments were taking place in Europe. The change of trade routes and the transfer of wealth and capital from the colonies, especially from the New World, resulted in considerable capital accumulation in Europe, leading to the innovation of technologies in production. A new class, the bourgeoisie, was flourishing. Innovations also spilled into military technology and together these developments created unfavorable conditions for the Ottoman Empire. New trade routes and colonies deprived the Empire of a source of income and advanced military technology made the European armies far superior to the Empire's armed forces and its further expansion impossible. As Europe was advancing in many fields, the Ottoman Empire was remaining totally isolated and ignorant, slowly but surely losing the superiority it once held.

It was only in the early eighteenth century that the Ottomans realized the negative effects of these changes that had taken place over the preceding centuries. The authors of the counsels had already articulated and signaled the need for change. Some were proponents of returning to the time of Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent, an age of warfare, territorial expansion and widespread construction. The reasons for their suggestions can be summarized as the rupture of the connection between the principal and agent. After the reign of Süleyman, many sultans *de facto* left the management of the affairs of the state to their viziers. As Kennedy notes, after 1566 there were thirteen sultans who were mentally incompetent.² To this observation it should be added that there were seven sultans who ruled less than four years. After the rule of Süleyman, a total of twenty-six sultans came to the throne. With thirteen of them incapable of rule and seven of them barely staying four years on the throne, the frequent turnover in leadership would have made their rule ineffective.

It is evident that the objective function of the viziers, especially of the Grand Viziers, to maximize their personal benefits, did not coincide with that of the Sultan. In more cases than not, their personal interests and tendencies toward self-enrichment were det-

² Kennedy, *op.cit.* p. 11.

rimonial to civil administration and contradicted the Sultan's ability to function objectively. Even if the counsel authors had diagnosed and clearly articulated this dichotomy, they were only hinting at the principal-agent theory. According to them, Süleyman was the last absolute monarch, assuming all the power in his hands and making all the decisions. To restore the management conditions of his time appeared to be a panacea that would regain the Empire's superiority.

The changes in Europe first ended the Empire's expansion and then led the European powers to recapture the territories they had lost to the Ottomans. As explained earlier, the events led to chronic deficits in Ottoman finances. The revenue structure of the Empire was such that in addition to taxes on agriculture and trade, conquests provided additional finances in a predatory fashion, violating property rights in conquered lands in particular. While the end to conquests deprived the Empire of required funds, the subsequent wars, although defensive in nature, resulted in a surge of expenditures. The transaction costs of obtaining the needed revenue kept increasing. Thus began the never-ending imbalance in the budget. The predatory practices within the Empire continued until about the middle of the nineteenth century. Numerous statesmen not only lost their lives as punishment ordered by the Sultan, but upon their death their property and wealth were confiscated and transferred to the treasury. The side effects of this practice are obvious. Not only did it prevent capital accumulation, but with the hope that they would survive, it forced the higher echelon bureaucrats, who were agents, to accumulate wealth as fast as possible. Venality, detrimental to the state, became embedded in the state's organizations. The need to offer substantial gifts to one's superiors to hold an office obliged every state servant to reimburse himself regularly. Public funds were misappropriated throughout the hierarchy; and the individual who drew the greatest benefit was the Grand Vizier.

There was also a drastic and detrimental change in the Janissary Order. Originally, Janissaries were recruited as very young Christian boys (*devshirme*) who were indoctrinated into Islam and absorbed into the army. They could not marry and could have no other occupation. In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries they were permitted to have other occupations due to the difficulty in paying them, and they were given the right to marry.

Moreover, their children could enter the corps automatically. Providing a livelihood to the Janissaries in addition to their salaries had disastrous effects. They stopped being a fighting force and became more interested in protecting their wealth and families than in fighting against the enemy. Eventually, the fear of the corps' elimination created a powerful lobby within the Janissary Order that would oppose any change of their benefits. Instead of serving the Sultan, the principal, which was their only purpose, they became interested in self-preservation alone.

Ottoman statesmen only realized that certain reforms were necessary at the beginning of the eighteenth century. The first attempt at reform was made in the Tulip Era, a short period that saw endeavors to bring about certain organizational changes. But it had to face the Janissaries on the one hand and the *ulema*/mullahs on the other. The Janissaries rejected European technologies and the *ulema*/mullahs joined them, since, in their view, these changes meant the adoption of European technology and civilization, which were the work of infidels.

Sultan Mahmud II succeeded in breaking the mullah/Janissary coalition up to a point, and removed the army from politics. The period that followed Mahmud's reign was a fairly quiet one. However, a military coup, intent on establishing a constitutional monarchy, dethroned Sultan Abdülaziz and another dethroned Abdülhamid II. This suggests that the organizational changes, especially those seeking to prevent the army's intervention in civil administration, were only partially successful.

The institutional change that was brought in the very early years of Abdülhamid's reign — the introduction of the constitution — was short-lived. After a year or so, the parliament was sent to a *sine die* recess and the Ottoman Empire returned to absolutism. The political party that came into power after dethroning Abdülhamid soon degenerated and resulted in a dictatorial regime led by the military until the end of the First World War. Review of the changes that were brought about reveals that most were organizational, and only very few institutional. The basic tenet of this book is that institutional changes seek alterations of laws, decrees and mores, whereas organizational changes aim to bring about improvements in the established mechanisms in the application of the institutions. If appropriate changes in institutions are not carried out, organizational changes are bound to remain ineffectual.

In the minds of the reformers of the nineteenth century, 'reform' meant to be like Europe — and France in particular. To be 'European' started with familiarizing oneself with French culture as well as accepting its military technology. The era of the *Tanzimat* is a perfect example of this as dress codes were changed and both the upper classes and the ruling elite began to dress with smocks and trousers. Although Âli Pasha warned time and again, "Let us take from Europe what we need and what is useful to us; let us not copy them blindly", his advice went unheeded.

In all previous Muslim empires — such as the Omayyad and Abbasid dynasties — a unique relationship existed between the state and religion. After the capture of Cairo by Selim I in 1517, the Ottoman Sultan became the Caliph. In other words, he was the temporal head as well as the religious head of the Empire. The investiture of both state and religious authority in the same individual would stifle and hamper explains reformation in the Ottoman Empire. Any change that did not affect temporal relations would affect the religious institutions, and vice versa.

What the Ottomans sought (that is, to be like Europe), evolved within an institutional paradigm totally foreign to the Ottomans. Starting with the Magna Carta and continuing with the Renaissance, Reformation and Enlightenment and ending with the French revolutions of 1789 and 1848, a paradigm that was totally foreign to the Ottomans was created as each period in Europe changed the status quo, sometimes incrementally, sometimes drastically. These changes defined and redefined the state, as well as the relationship between the government and the governed and the relations among the governed. No such thing is observable in Ottoman history. At one point in Europe, conflict between the state and religion was a prime motor of this change, whereas in the Ottoman Empire such a thing was unthinkable. The Magna Carta ushered in a structural change between the feudal lords and central power and eventually led to an established landholding class. This transformation was impossible in the Ottoman Empire, since the Sultan was the owner of all the land and people (*malikullah*), as well as shadow of God (*zîlullah*). Being the owner of the land and the people, the Sultan bestowed land rights upon whomever he deemed desirable. But he could also take these rights away with equal ease. While in Europe the landed aristocracy was a power that affected the institutional structure, in the Ottoman Empire

landed aristocracy could not perpetuate itself as a separate class. Notables in Europe tried to extend their power and wealth in more cases than not by establishing religious endowments in order to protect themselves from predatory finance, but in the Ottoman Empire there was no mechanism that would transfer either the title or all the wealth to their family and heirs. There never was a hereditary class in the Ottoman Empire. Hence, three institutions remained intact: the government, military establishment and the *ulema* continued to be the prime basis of society. Without changing the institutions of power, organizational change could not yield its intended effects. Change in institutions and concomitant organizational changes are the prime movers for development, prosperity or decline in any country. Europe changed the institutions and the corresponding organizations, whereas in the Ottoman Empire the success, at whatever level it might have been, was brought about only in organizations without any meaningful change to institutions. Organizational changes are somewhat easier because they can be brought about by fiat, whereas institutional changes are much more difficult and require a long period of gestation or sudden and complete breaks with the past.

The Ottoman Empire was an orphan from the standpoint of institutional changes. The absence of such institutional changes, even if they were intended, is due to the fact that the Empire's geographical place in the world was against it. In the north there was Tsarist Russia whose ambitions were to reach the warm waters of the Mediterranean. Because of this there were nine wars between Tsarist Russia and the Ottoman Empire that lasted thirty three years in total between 1700 and 1878. With the exception of the Crimean War, Russia won every single one of them. Even if the Ottomans truly wanted institutional reform, the long wars, putting aside the transaction costs, left very little time to assess and evaluate the success or failure of reforms.

History shows us that, at the expense of generalization, empires are born, live and die. This is not a fatalistic view; it is a kind of social dynamism. Obviously, no empire on its own accord climbs upon its death bed. From Sultan Selim III to the CUP, all endeavored to prevent the inevitable. They only succeeded in extending the life of the Ottoman Empire.

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GLOSSARY

- Ağa* Honorific title; rural master; rank for some palace staff
- Asakiri mensure-i Muhammediye* Victorious Soldiers of Muhammad, military corps to replace the janissaries
- Avarız* Emergency tax imposed usually to finance wars
- Âyan* Rural notable; also denotes representative of a group of people
- Bâbı Âli* Supreme Porte; collectively seat of the government
- Beylerbey* Governor general. There were two, one for Anatolia, one for Rumelia
- Cebeci* Artillery corps
- Cizye* Poll tax on Moslems
- CUP* Committee of Union and Progress, subsequently known as Party of Union and Progress (*İttihat ve Terakki Partisi*)
- Defterdar* Registrar of taxpayers and tax amounts; also minister of finance in the Divan
- Devshirme* Young Christian boys recruited, converted to Islam and educated for services in the palace or as janissaries.
- Divan* Cabinet
- Divan-ı Hümayun* Imperial Council; cabinet presided either by the Sultan or the Grand Vizier
- Dragoman* See *Tercüman*
- Emin* Salaried, tax-collecting agents
- Eshkindji* See *eşkinçi*
- Eşkinçi* Military units established by Mahmud II separate from the janissaries
- Ethnike Hetairia* Greek National Society established in 1894 to expand Greek territory
- Grand Vizier* Chief of the cabinet
- Fatwa* Opinion on a specific legal matter issued by the *Sheikhulislâm* or his subordinates.
- Haraç* Tax on non-Moslems
- Harem* Section of the Palace where women are housed

Hatt Imperial Edict

İlmiye Ulema class

İltizam Contract for a specified period to collect taxes

Kadı Judge, using *sharia*

Kadıasker Chief Judge

Kapıağası Chief white eunuch in the imperial palace

Kapıkulu Palace servant or palace guard

Kethüda Person in charge of the affairs of important statesmen and rich persons; also sometimes deputy Grand Vizier in charge of internal affairs

Madrasah School of higher learning

Mahalle mektebi Primary schools where reading, writing and Koran were taught

Meclis Assembly, council

Meclis-i vilâyet Council attached to the office of the provincial governor in which Moslem and non-Moslem communities were represented

Meclis-i Mebusan Parliament

Meclis-i Meşveret Consultative Council, which met once upon the invitation of Selim III

Muhtesip Person in charge of collecting fees and certain taxes

Mukataa Revenue yielding land

Mültezim Tax farmer, tax collector

Mütevelli Caretaker of religious endowments

Nezâret-i Adliye Ministry of Justice

Nizâm-ı Cedid The new army of Selim III; also generic term for the new order

Nüzul Provisions for the army

Orta Battalion

Padişah The title of the Ottoman sultan

Padishah See *Padişah*

Pasha, Paşa In the military order a rank of general; in the civilian administration title of those who are promoted to level of vizier

Reaya Taxpaying subjects

Reis-ül-küttab Minister of Foreign Affairs

Rüşdiye Middle school corresponding approximately to junior high school

Sadrazam See *Grand Vizier*

Sheikhulislâm Head of the religious class; chief upholder of *sharia*

Sipahi Cavalry men

Tanzimat Reorganization; the political reforms during the reign of Sultan Abdülmecid and the following period until Abdülhamid II.

Tercüman Official interpreter/translator of the government

Timar Land bestowed by the Sultan to a commander

Ulema Religious order; legal scholars and theologians

Vakıf Tax exempt religious or pious foundation

Vali Governor of a province

Vilâyet Province governed by a governor

Zeamet Large land bestowed by the Sultan to a cavalry commander

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

The authors, both natives of Istanbul, studied developmental economics at the Universities of Istanbul, Michigan and Edinburgh. They taught economics and public finance at the University of Puerto Rico and jointly and individually published fifteen books and monographs, and over sixty articles on the same subjects in professional journals in the United States, Great Britain and Germany. Upon retirement Fuat Andic continues to work as a senior consultant to international organizations. He is the author and co-author of over one hundred reports, mostly dealing with development and governance issues. Suphan Andic, after working several years as a consultant to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, retired from consultancy and collaborated with her husband on researching Ottoman history.

They are the authors of:

The Last of the Ottoman Grandees: The Life and Political Testament of Âli Paşa, Istanbul, ISIS Press, 1995; second edition Piscataway, New Jersey, Gorgias Press, 2012.

Âli Paşa, Hayatı, Zamanı ve Siyasî Vasiyetnamesi, Istanbul, EREN, 2000 (Turkish version of the above).

Kırım Savaşı: The Crimean War: Âli Paşa and the Treaty of Paris (Kırım Savaşı, Âli Paşa ve Paris Antlaşması) Istanbul, EREN, 2002.

Window to the West: The Tulip Era (Batıya Açılan Pencere: Lâle Devri), Istanbul, EREN, 2006.

Reforms in the Ottoman Empire (Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Islahatlar), Ankara, Hitapevi, 2013.

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The book is the history of reform attempts in the Ottoman Empire and the internal and external difficulties in implementing them. Imperialist aggression towards the Empire and bloody janissary revolts hampered the reforms, and although some successes in governance were achieved, there were many failures, and these contributed to the demise of the Empire at the end of the First World War.

Reforms began in 1718 during the period known as the Tulip Era, which ended in 1730 with a bloody janissary uprising. Sultan Selim III, who reigned from 1789 to 1807, then tried to engage with domestic and military reform. His reform efforts conflicted with the interests of both the janissaries and the religious leaders and made the sultan a victim of another janissary uprising. Mahmud II, successor to Selim III, strove to change the paradigm of governance with his personal administration. His most daring action was the eradication of the unruly janissary organisation.

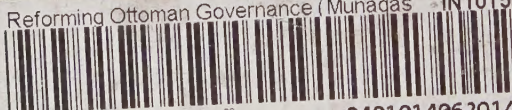
The concept of a constitutional monarchy penetrated the Empire, first in the form of Tanzimat in 1839, and subsequently with the issuance of a constitution in 1876. The sultan of the time, Abdülhamid II, became convinced that he could run the Empire alone and suspended the constitution. He was dethroned by a military coup in 1909. The janissaries had disappeared from the Empire, but their mentality had not. A new constitution was declared by amateur politicians and military officers, members of a revolutionary committee known as 'Union and Progress', also known in the West as the 'Young Turks'. They were well intentioned, but faced two disastrous wars, one in Libya, the other in the Balkans. Their administration quickly degenerated into a dictatorship and they had hardly enough time to carry out any meaningful reforms. In 1914 the Ottoman Empire entered the First World War together with Germany, the death knell of an empire that had lasted seven hundred years.

Front cover: The Enthronement of Selim III, 1789, by Konstantin Kapıdaglı Jülüis.



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